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THE

PRACTICAL WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOB ORTON, S.T.P.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED.

CONSISTING OF

DISCOURSES, SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS, AND LETTERS,

WITH COPIOUS INDEXES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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RELIGIOUS EXERCISES RECOMMENDED:

OR

DISCOURSES

ON

SECRET AND FAMILY WORSHIP,

AND THE

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

WITH

TWO DISCOURSES ON THE HEAVENLY STATE, CONSIDERED UNDER THE IDEA OF A SABBATH.

"The Lord God of Israel saith, Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed,"—1 Sam. ii. 30.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

PREFACE.

HAVING been obliged, through the ill state of my health, to lay aside the public exercises of the ministry, I have been considering how I might improve those intervals of ease and chearfulness, with which a kind Providence hath indulged me, for the service of mankind: for serviceable I would still be; like one that, as Dr. Lucas expresseth it, "truly loves his country, when no other way is left him, he fights for it on his stumps; so will I, even in the remains of a broken constitution, express at least my affection for mankind, and breathe out my last gasp in its service." Nothing seemed to myself and my friends more likely to answer this end, than to publish some of the compositions of my better days. Under a deep consciousness of their imperfections, this is my encouragement; that there are different tastes and relishes in the world; that something new, or expressed in a different style and manner, peculiar to the writer himself, may have a greater tendency to inform and impress the readers, than more accurate performances on the same subjects, with which they are already acquainted. A new publication may also serve to supply the place and carry on the design of those treatises, on the like topics, which may be falling into forgetfulness. On these accounts, and from the great importance of the subjects of them, I hope the following discourses will be acceptable and useful to some; especially to those who heard them preached, whose spiritual benefit I am particularly bound still to consult; and whom I desire to consider this book as affectionately dedicated to them.

It will be natural for the reader to inquire, why I fixed upon the subjects contained in this volume. My reasons were these. From all that I have seen and heard of the state of religion in this nation, there seem to be no subjects concerning which it hath more need to be seriously addressed and admonished. That there is a general neglect of the important duties here urged, is, alas! too evident; and that this neglect is of most pernicious consequence, the profaneness, luxury, dissipation, licentiousness, and factious spirit, which characterize the age, too plainly demonstrate. There seems to me much reason to fear, that the many strong things which have been said from the pulpit and the press against superstition and enthusiasm, however true and just in themselves, have had a tendency, for want of being properly guarded, to increase these evils.* While persons, with a good design, have been solicitous to caution others against laying an undue stress on the means of religion or its external forms, they have, before they were aware, led too many into

* "It is an extensively mischievous practice, when men join in loose harangues against enthusiasm and superstition, without putting in due cautions to distinguish them from the most rational feelings of love and marks of respect to our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, which Christianity hath enjoined."—Archbishop Secker's Sermons, vol. i. serm. 10, p. 228.

the contrary and more dangerous extreme: namely, that of neglecting some of those duties which are most clearly and reasonably required of us, and performing the rest in a very lifeless, trifling manner. If their cautions against superstition and enthusiasm are attended with bitter reflections or sneers upon those who appear to be deeply serious and in earnest in religious exercises and concerns, it is no wonder that the rising generation is prejudiced against every thing grave and serious, especially all the devotional parts of religion. If youth once come to think lightly of these, it is to be feared that they will soon lose all sense of religious obligation, and live altogether "without God in the world." For it cannot be expected that any practical regards to God and the great motives of religion should be kept up in the mind, if the public and private exercises of devotion sink into contempt. I hope these discourses, as far as they extend, may by the blessing of God contribute to check this growing corruption, by leading those who read them at least to pause and consider before they conform to the world; and by exciting those who have hitherto made conscience of regarding all divine commands and institutions, to be watchful against declensions, and "abstain from the appearance of evil," how many soever venture upon it.

As to the discourses themselves, they are plain and familiar; at least it hath cost me no little pains to make them so. But of this kind I think all popular discourses ought to be, if preachers desire to engage the attention and affect the heart. It is too common for them to have their language or their ideas above the capacity of the bulk of their hearers. These are chiefly intended for persons of low education and common abilities; as I desire to stoop to the humble office of helping the lower rank of men in the way to happiness and heaven, whose capacities and advantage are too little consulted in most modern publications.

On this account I have not entered critically into the arguments for the religious observation of the Lord's-day; especially those which have been grounded on the fourth commandment; but have endeavoured, as clearly as I could, to state and illustrate those which appeared to me most solid and affecting. Though particular arguments should be thought by some weak and of little force, or not stated with sufficient accuracy, I hope that, when the whole is taken together, it will evidently show our obligation to this duty. Bishop Burnet, in his History of the Reformation, observes, that "it had been happy for the church, if all had agreed, since that time, to press the religious observation of the Lord's-day, without starting needless questions about the morality of it, and the obligation of the fourth commandment. For when one party raised the obligation of that day to a pitch that was not practicable, it provoked others to slacken it too much. This produced many sharp reflections on both sides, and hath concluded in too common a neglect of that day; which, instead of being so great a bond and instrument of religion, is become generally a day of idleness and looseness." I have endeavoured to avoid both these extremes, and have urged nothing as a necessary part of sabbath sanctification, but what appeared to me scriptural, and what I am well persuaded from reading, observation, and experience, is practicable and useful.

They who are well acquainted with the writers upon the subjects here handled, may perceive that I have in some places made considerable use of the sentiments, and perhaps of the language, of some of them. I am principally indebted to Dr. Wright's Treatise on the Lord's Day, and

Mr. Howe's Sermons on Family Religion. As I imagine very few have seen the latter, and not many the former, I thought I should do some service, by adopting the most striking sentiments in these excellent books, and suggesting them to those who might never see the books themselves. If I appear only as an humble collector, I hope this work will not be less acceptable and useful on that account; and if the critics censure me, it will affect me very little, amidst many heavier burdens which Providence hath seen fit to lay upon me.

Many will doubtless suggest that my directions relating to the several subjects here considered are too precise and strict; that men will not now bear such an application to the religious exercises of the closet and family, and particularly those of the sabbath, as I have urged. Such a plea may seem at first view very specious; and it is not improbable that some ministers, who have had the interest of religion really at heart, may have been discouraged by the same apprehension from making such attempts, as they might otherwise have made, for the revival of it by the methods here proposed. They would be glad to see a devotional spirit increasing among us; but have been ready to think it in vain to stand against the stream, or to expect, from the present generation, that strict observance of religious duties which was so great an honour to our pious ancestors. In answer to this reasoning, I beg leave to remind my readers, and especially my brethren in the ministry, of that awful admonition to the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xv. 19, "Thus saith the Lord, If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Distinguish accurately between the good and bad. Insist upon men's compliance with the demands of my word which thou art to lay before them; but do not thou lower the standard of religion, comply with their customs and humour, or think to make the matter easier to them than my word hath made it. I heartily wish that all Christian ministers may act this faithful part, and guard against the numerous temptations, which they will find in this age, to allow themselves in that conduct which the prophet is warned against. I am very sensible that some regard is to be had to the different taste of the age, with regard to the *manner* in which persons are to be addressed on religious subjects, and instructions and admonition given. Here Christian prudence must direct; and that method should be chosen which will be most likely to win upon the mind, and thus answer the end proposed. But still the truths to be delivered and the duties to be enforced are always the same; and we are to take all our directions from the invariable standard of the scripture, and not attempt to bring down its rules to the corrupted manners of the age. The instructors of others ought to be very cautious, however good their intentions may be, that they do not make concessions in favour of any fashionable practices or neglects, which they know or suspect to be contrary to the word of God, or may be of pernicious tendency.* It is surely more becoming their character seriously

* As a specimen of such concessions, relating to the observation of the Lord's day in particular, I am sorry to be able to refer to a respectable and serious writer; who adviseth young men to spend the remainder of the sabbath, after public worship, "either in reading or meditation, or in innocent and amusing walks, with such as they are sure will lead them into no evil, but instruct and improve them by their friendly and rational conversation."—Dodd's Sermons to Young Men, vol. i. serm. 6, p. 198. Yet

to remonstrate against them, "whether men will hear or forbear." Let me add, that when they think it needful to guard their hearers against superstition or enthusiasm, the utmost caution is necessary, that they do not lessen in their esteem the importance of religious duties, and lead them unawares either to neglect them or perform them in a careless, superficial manner. They should consider that the generality of mankind cannot distinguish nicely on such subjects; and, unless great care be taken, will be in danger of mistaking what is said of the abuse of religious institutions for an objection to the institutions themselves. We see universally that persons are ready enough to depart from the strictness of the rule. Such is the depravity of human nature, and such the force of custom and fashion in this degenerate age! But if the rule itself be relaxed, it is to be feared there are too many who will take the advantage of such concessions to go yet further; and, as I have known to be the case, will plead the authority of their ministers for practices which those ministers really disapprove, and think inconsistent with the religion of Jesus.

I have only to desire that these discourses may be tried by the word of God: and if any thing be urged in them which is not expressly required there, or may not, by fair consequence, be deduced from it, and therefore is in effect required, the reader is at liberty to reject it. Otherwise let him take heed how he reject it, lest he be found despising, not man, but God. By this word we are all to be judged at last, and not by the fashions and manners of the age. May we all therefore pay a becoming regard to it, and to those duties owing to the blessed God, which it commandeth; for "to love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength, is the first and great commandment."

I commend these discourses to the reader's candid and serious perusal and to the divine blessing: earnestly praying that they may be prospered as a means of reviving the decaying interest of piety and holiness; which can only be revived and supported by a more strict and conscientious regard to all divine institutions. Amen.

J. O.

Kidderminster, Sept. 15, 1769.

this writer laments the profanation of the sabbath in this age and nation, especially in London and its environs. And might not many of the profaners of it plead the license of this eminent and popular preacher, and so "get a snare to their souls?" Nothing is more evident than that in such cases the proverb is verified, that if vou give men an inch they will take an ell.

PROPERTY OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THREE DISCOURSES

ON

SECRET PRAYER.

DISCOURSE I.

CHRIST'S DIRECTIONS CONCERNING SECRET PRAYER.

MATTHEW VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

THE apostle Peter observeth, that "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And it is the great design of the gospel, of all its doctrines and precepts, all its promises and sanctions, to bring us back to God from whom we had revolted; to restore his image upon our souls, and recover us to his favour and friendship, in order to being prepared for everlasting happiness in and with him. Now, how can we become like God, conformed to his image, and happy in his favour, but by acquaintance and converse with him; by setting him always before us, and frequently addressing him in a serious, solemn manner, as the greatest and best of beings? It is no wonder, therefore, that the scripture lays so great a stress upon this; represents religion as "walking with God," and requires us to abound in the exercises of prayer and praise. It is necessary, if we would resemble God, and enjoy his friendship, that we have our seasons of retirement, to converse with him; and by reading, meditation, and prayer, enjoy "communion with the Father and with his Son Christ Jesus."

This is the duty I am now to recommend to you: a duty, which, if we may judge by the tempers and lives of professing Christians, is either shamefully neglected, or very carelessly performed. And even the best of us need to be stirred up to be more regular, serious, and lively in the discharge of it. Hear, then, ye disciples of Christ, what your Lord and master saith. He had been cautioning his followers against the vanity and hypocrisy of many of the Jews in their acts of charity and de-

votion, and directs them how to perform these duties. Having mentioned the hypocrisy of the Jews in their manner of praying, and the ends they proposed by it, he, in the text, tells us how we are to perform it, in what manner, and for what end. Intending to discourse to you on the reasonableness and advantage of secret prayer, and to give you some hints of advice on the proper manner of performing it, I cannot introduce the subject better than with our text; "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." In treating upon it I shall,

I. Consider the directions our Lord gives for the performance of secret prayer.

II. The arguments by which he urgeth it.

III. Lay before you some further motives to excite you to the discharge of it. And then,

IV. Propose some reflections and advices which may be serviceable for conviction, direction, and encouragement. And may that God who delighteth in the prayer of the upright, and inhabiteth the praises of the grateful, prosper this humble attempt to promote his glory and your edification! I propose,

I. *To consider the directions our Lord here gives relating to secret prayer.* And he directs, that prayer be offered to God; that it be offered in secret; and that it be addressed to God as our Father.

1. He requires that prayer be offered to God. This is plainly and strongly intimated, though not directly expressed in the text. You see he takes it for granted that his disciples did and would pray to God, each by himself. He does not set himself to prove this to be a duty: they knew it and allowed it to be a very important one. It was a duty which the light of nature directed; which was required of the Jews and practised by them. They laid great stress upon it. Those that appeared religious among them made many prayers. The times of offering up the morning and evening sacrifice were their usual times of prayer. The incense which the priests offered every day in the temple, was to be considered as an emblem of prayer; as accompanying the private prayers of the whole nation, and intended to represent the acceptableness of them unto God. The direction he gives his disciples in the text, how to perform this duty, is in effect a command to perform it, persevere in it, and not to neglect it. He would not have given them a rule how to perform it, except they had before known it to be their duty, or had received previous commands from him about it. So, in the foregoing verse, he directs them how to give their alms; which implies, that it was their duty to be liberal, and relieve the poor, according to their ability. Christ had also set them an example of performing this duty;

and they knew, from his precepts and example, that their obligation to it was not superseded and set aside by their joining in any social worship; particularly not by going up to the temple and praying there. Besides, it is necessary to be considered, that the promise annexed to this service in the text, of being "rewarded openly," intimates that it was their duty: for the promises are made to the faithful discharge of our duty. So that our Lord's taking it for granted that they would offer up private prayer, directing them how to do it, and giving them an encouraging promise, is as much a command to perform it, as if it had been delivered in express words. And we shall afterwards see that we have other scripture authority to recommend and enforce it. Our Lord directs his disciples,

2. That this duty be performed in secret. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray." He directs them in the foregoing verse, that they should not be as the hypocrites, that "love to pray standing in the synagogues, and the corners of the streets." The Pharisees and other hypocritical Jews had their stated hours of prayer, and they contrived to be caught, at those hours, in some public place, as in the synagogues or corners of streets, that it might seem an accidental thing: there they stood and prayed, to be seen of men, and reverenced as persons of uncommon piety. But Christ directs his disciples to avoid all appearance of ostentation, and when their times of prayer were come, to "enter into their closet." The word signifies any secret, retired apartment; and may include a closet, bed-chamber, or any solitary place. Some have imagined that our Lord used a word of this latitude, comprehending any retired place, that his disciples might have no excuse for omitting the duty, because they had not the convenience of such a place as they chose, or thought sufficiently private. He directs them to "shut the door," in order to avoid ostentation; to exclude spectators; to keep out, as much as possible, any noise from diverting the thoughts; and to prevent any interruption in the service. He would have them retire from all mankind; even from their famlies and nearest relations; get as far as they could out of the noise and hurry of the world; have their hearts free from worldly cares and distractions; and attain as much fixedness and composure of thought as was in their power. The nature of private prayer requires this: it is a private personal business; with which no one hath any concern but the person himself; and the reason our Lord gives, that God "seeth in secret," implies that no one else doth or should see. It is true, indeed, all have not closets or bed-chambers of their own; they have not the same conveniences for retirement: but their duty is to be as retired as they can, and not omit this service because they cannot be as retired as they would. It is every one's business to

manage this service in as private and unaffected a manner as they can. Our circumstances may be such, that it cannot be hid. Our families may know, that at stated times, we retire by ourselves; and will naturally suppose, if they have any sense of religion, that we retire for reading, meditation, and prayer: and there is nothing in this to be ashamed of. There is no reason we should be unwilling they should know this; for it will be an instruction and example to them; and this is no way inconsistent with our Lord's direction. But care should be taken to perform this duty without any unbecoming elevation of voice: though I believe most Christians find, that a distinct pronunciation of words, with a low voice, is most useful; as tending to keep the thoughts engaged, and prevent distractions. Our Lord plainly intimates that it is an important, serious, solemn work; and therefore we should be careful that no foreign objects, no impertinent thoughts intrude, but that it be performed heartily as unto the Lord, and to him only. Christ directs his disciples,

3. That God be addressed as a Father. Prayer is a fixed serious address to God; and when we pray to him we are to consider him as a Father, and have a view to his approbation and acceptance. We are to consider him as the Father of the whole universe. All creatures are his offspring. He is the great Parent-mind; the Father of our spirits; and all souls are his. By the expression, "Your Father which is in secret," some understand, his being invisible to our bodily eyes. He is a Spirit, whom no man hath seen or can see. We pray not to an idol that is the object of sense, that we can see and touch; nor are we to address prayer to any creature, as an image or representation of God, but to him alone who is invisible. We are to pray under a full persuasion of his omniscience and omnipresence; that though we see him not, yet he seeth and knoweth us and all things. We are therefore to consider him as actually present with us; hearing every word we utter, discerning every thought which ariseth in our minds. He is there, where no one else is; and we are to set him before us as the witness of our most private actions, our most secret thoughts. We are to pray as if we saw the eternal Jehovah standing in some visible lustre before us, and attending to every word we utter. When we are exhorted to address God as "our Father," it intimates that we are to pray in faith; faith in his perfect knowledge, wisdom, and goodness. "He that cometh to God," saith the apostle, "must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We are to address him as "our Father," who gave us our being, on whom we constantly depend, as a wise and good Father, always able and always ready to help; with a belief that he heareth our prayers, and will grant all those things that are needful, or will

be good for us. We are to acknowledge, adore, and give him the glory of his infinite perfections and excellencies; to acknowledge our obligations to him for his various and numberless mercies; to confess, with shame and sorrow, our ingratitude, undutifulness, and disobedience; to entreat his fatherly mercy, help, and comfort; to devote ourselves, and all we have and can do, to him; acknowledging his right and claim to our best services; and we are to make intercession for his whole family, to address him as "our Father who is in heaven," and pray for one another. Further, addressing God as our Father, who is in secret, intimates that we should do it with great seriousness and reverence; be careful what we say, and not be rash to utter any thing with our mouths. A greater freedom is allowable in our private addresses to God than in our social ones; but still there is a decorum to be observed in his presence, as there is in the presence of an earthly father or sovereign, if we were alone with him; for God is not only "greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints," but "to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Once more, addressing him as our Father intimates that we should do it with earnest desire and cheerful hope; sensible of our wants, their number and importance, and rejoicing in this assurance, that "he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will, with him, also freely give us all things." We are to consider,

II. *The arguments by which our Lord urgeth this duty.* They are these three: God was their Father; he seeth in secret; and would reward them openly. Let us consider each of these with application to ourselves.

1. God is our Father. This is both an obligation and an encouragement to pray in secret. It is an obligation. God is *our* Father. He is, as we hinted above, the Parent of the whole universe; the Father of men and angels; and there was nothing peculiar in the character or circumstances of the disciples which will not equally affect us. Besides, the multitude, as well as his disciples, were now his hearers: he addressed this sermon to them, and, as the evangelist tells us at the close of it, taught them with authority. God is our Father. So in the Lord's prayer Christ hath instructed us to address him as his children. As such we are obliged to pray to him. It is an act of homage which we owe to the Father of our spirits; for, as he himself argueth, "If I be a father, where is my fear," or reverence? Private prayer is a part of morality; a duty we owe to God, resulting from our relation and obligations to him, and dependence upon him. Every one is bound to pay respect to his superiors; every child in a family to pay particular and distinct homage and duty to a parent. To this I would add, that

the condescension of God in styling himself "our Father," and permitting our application to him under that endearing title, though we are unworthy, sinful creatures, increaseth the obligation to it. He hath sent his Son, his only begotten, his dear Son, to assure us of his parental care and love, and introduce us into his presence. Therefore we must be rude, ungrateful, disobedient, and rebellious, if we neglect praying to him. His being our Father is also an encouragement to pray. Children naturally bring all their complaints to their Father; ask him for what they want, and desire his favour and blessing. They expect a supply of their wants, and tenderness, pity, and help, from him. Now the blessed God hath a much greater tenderness and concern for us than our earthly parents. He putteth into their hearts all their fatherly pity and affection; and, as our Lord beautifully and strongly argues, "if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"* His heart is always full of tenderness; his eyes are ever upon his devout children; his ears are always open to their cry. Through Christ "we have access by one Spirit to the Father;" and under the influence of that Spirit we may say, "Abba, Father," with humble confidence that he will satisfy all the reasonable desires of our hearts. "Your Father," saith Christ in the 8th verse, "knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," and is disposed to give them. But he hath commanded us to pray as a means of obtaining them, and will not grant his choicest blessings without prayer. So he saith, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; thoughts of peace and not of evil;" but it is added, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you!"† Another argument is,

2. Our Father seeth in secret. You are not addressing an idol that can neither hear nor see; nor praying to a god that cannot save; but addressing Jehovah, who is a Spirit, invisible to mortal eyes. And it becomes us to give him the glory of his omnipresence, and adore his comprehensive and boundless knowledge. His infinitely capacious mind reads every sentiment and thought through the immense creation. He is not only present in heaven, where ten thousand times ten thousand holy worshippers continually bow before him; he is not only present in the assemblies of his people here below, but with *every* particular person in his most solitary place and retired moments. Were each of his rational creatures to retire at the same time to pray to him, his eye would be upon every one of them; his ear would reach to every place, and attend to every request; and not one petition would be overlooked or forgotten by him. What an awful, and, at the same time, what a com-

* Matt. vii. 11. † Jer. xxix. 11, 12.

fortable thought! Who would not fear thee, O thou Searcher of all hearts? Who would not address thee, O thou God that hearest prayer? Let me repeat the important thought in his own words: "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good; neither is there any creature but what is manifest in his sight." "All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." "The darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to him." "He discerneth our thoughts afar off. There is not a word in our tongue but he knoweth it altogether:", "yea, he knoweth the things that come into our minds, every one of them." Now is not this glorious and awful Being the worthy object of our reverence and adoration? He seeth the praying Christian in his deepest retirement; he seeth the recesses of his heart, those sentiments, affections, and desires, which none but himself can discern. You need not be afraid, children, of going alone into the darkest and most solitary place to pray, for your heavenly Father is there. Nothing can come there to hurt or frighten you, nor will your broken language be uttered in vain. God delighteth in the secret prayers even of a child. What an encouragement is this to us all, to "pour out our hearts" before our heavenly Father. He seeth our gratitude and humiliation; he discerneth our holy desires, pious affections, and good resolutions. All our desire is before him, and our groaning is not hid from him. Even those groanings, those strong and earnest desires, "that cannot be uttered," which no words can sufficiently express, are all known to him; for he knoweth the mind of the Spirit, which is a thousand times more concealed than the recesses of the closet. Pray to thy Father then in secret, for he seeth in secret; not only with perfect discernment, but with approbation and delight. He hearkens, with pleasing attention, to what thou utterest in thy closet: he hears it; he never forgets it; it is all recorded in the book of his remembrance, and he will testify his approbation of it; which leads me to add, that another argument which our Lord urges to recommend secret prayer is,

3. Our heavenly Father will reward us openly. He never "said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." The critics are not agreed, to what this promise in the text particularly relates. Several interpretations have been given of the words; and they may all be true, as all are comprehended in this general declaration. It may refer partly to a reward in this world, but chiefly to one in another.

It may in part refer to a reward in this world. For instance, he sometimes confers upon devout Christians some special tokens of his favour; such as worldly prosperity, when he knows it will be good for them; and indeed prayer has a natural

tendency to promote diligence, prudence, moderation, and good economy; and so furthers men's temporal interests. It also draws down that blessing which maketh rich and adds no sorrow with it. Accordingly some very judicious Christians have observed and informed the world, that they have found their worldly business most prosperous and successful, when they have been most regular, serious, and lively in the exercises of secret duty. Perhaps the promise may also refer to the esteem of men. Those who, like the Pharisees, pray only to be seen of men have their reward. But the testimony of worthy and sensible men to our general good character, that we act our part well in life, is a great blessing, contributing to our usefulness; and it depends very much upon the turn which God giveth to men's minds. This is one way of rewarding his people, giving them favour in the sight of men. Sometimes God grants to his praying servants signal answers to their prayers. The world about them seeth the effects of the blessing, though they saw not the means or instrument of procuring it. Undoubtedly he rewards them openly by improving their gifts and graces. He bestows upon them more of the spirit of holiness; their tempers grow more mild, soft, and benevolent; their passions more composed and better governed; their graces are strengthened; their love to God and man increaseth, and they are filled with the fruits of righteousness. As, in consequence of this, they are more happy in themselves, more comfortable in their several relations, and more useful in the world, they may be said to be rewarded openly.

But I apprehend that the promise chiefly refers to the future world; to the recompence they shall receive at the resurrection of the just. Then the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man shall have praise of God. He will openly acknowledge them before the assembled world of men and angels as his devout servants. He will let that grand, general assembly know what pains this and that particular Christian took in his secret retirement, to understand his bible and feel the force of its truths; to keep his heart in a good frame while addressing his Father, and to enjoy communion with him. God will then applaud them as good and faithful servants, and confer perfect and everlasting happiness upon them. Though a Christian doth not pray to his Father in secret with a view merely to this honour; yet some regard to the esteem and affection of saints and angels is allowable; as we hope they will be the companions and joint partakers of our felicity. His main view is to please God and approve himself to him; and he will bountifully reward those services and actions which are so entirely referred to the views of honouring and pleasing him. There can be no merit in the case. Merit in prayer! nothing can be more ab-

surd. But our gracious Father will reward the devout petitions of his children as well as grant them.

These are the arguments by which Christ urgeth our praying in secret; that God is our Father; he seeth in secret; and will reward us openly. Here I must conclude the present discourse. Retire and think of these things. You call Christ Master and Lord; hear then what he saith, and comply with what he requireth. I had rather send one poor creature home to his knees, than have the applause of the whole assembly. Oh that God may pour out upon you all a spirit of grace and supplication! May he prepare and dispose your hearts to pray, and incline his ear to hear! Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF SECRET PRAYER.

MATTHEW VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

A LADY of great attainments in knowledge and piety,* used often to say, "she would not be hired out of her closet for a thousand worlds. She never enjoyed such hours of pleasure and such free and intimate communion with God, as she had there; and wondered how they could live prayerless, and deprive themselves of one of the greatest privileges allowed to men." I cannot wish you, brethren, a greater happiness, than that your lives may, in this respect, be like hers, lives of prayer; and then they will be sober, righteous, and godly lives; full of comfort, and full of usefulness. In order to promote this, I have been addressing, and am further to address you, on the important subject of secret prayer. I proposed to consider our Lord's directions concerning it in the text. He directs that this duty be performed; that it be performed in secret; and that prayer be addressed to God, as our Father. I then considered the arguments by which he urgeth this duty upon us; that God is our Father; that he seeth in secret; and will reward his devout servants openly; both in this and the future world. I now proceed,

III. *To urge some further motives and arguments to engage you to the practice of this duty.* And they are these; that it is a duty highly reasonable in itself; strongly recommended in scripture; that it is accompanied with peculiar pleasure and satisfac-

* Mrs. Bury.

tion; and will be attended with great and glorious advantages.

1. It is a duty highly reasonable in itself. Prayer is not, like baptism and the Lord's supper, a positive institution, commanded for the sake of some important end to which it is subservient, and necessary because it is commanded. But it is a moral duty; founded on the nature and reason of things, and the relation in which we stand to God; as much as obedience to a parent, or respect to other superiors. It is as necessary an act of justice to give God his due, as to render to every man his. Nor doth it stand merely on the same footing with other means for the attainment of an end; though in that view it must be allowed the first place among what are called the instrumental duties of religion. But it is a necessary act of homage to God, and a duty to him, as well as the means of making us more religious. It is a solemn act, by which we testify that we fear and reverence God, desire his favour, are grateful for his mercies, and devote ourselves to his service. And surely it is most reasonable that we should celebrate the excellencies of the most High; acknowledge our constant dependence upon him for the necessary supports of the animal and spiritual life; adore his general, over-ruling, and good providence; and thankfully own the particular interpositions of it in our favour. It is reasonable we should be grateful to human benefactors; much more to the best of Beings, who "daily loadeth us with his benefits." And as we are receiving personal favours from him, it is fit we should retire from the world, and acknowledge before him, who seeth in secret, how sensible we are of his goodness to us; how desirous we are to remember it; that we should in secret thank him for the supply of our wants, our spiritual blessings, and especially those improvements in religion, and manifestations of his love to our souls, with which he may favour us, and with which others are not indulged. Secret prayer is most reasonable, as it is a direct acknowledgment of his omnipresence and omniscience. And, as he knows all our sins and errors, it is fit we should acknowledge them before him, and give glory to God as a Being of boundless knowledge and perfect rectitude, as our almighty Ruler and Sovereign, by a free and ingenuous confession of our iniquities before him. It is reasonable we should pray, as we are sinful creatures; because God is displeased with our sins, hath it always in his power to punish us, and his anger is insupportably dreadful. The conscience of every thoughtful man must accuse him of many sins and transgressions which are not known to his most intimate acquaintance. It is proper to acknowledge and lament these in his presence. For we are never more likely to be humbled and repent, to be filled with shame, and confusion, and abhorrence of sin, than when we confess them before him, and consider him as the high and holy One, who is witness to them, and must hate

them. It is reasonable we should pray to God, as we constantly depend upon him for every thing pertaining both to life and godliness; as we have many wants which our own wisdom and power cannot supply, and are exposed to many evils, from which our own strength and prudence cannot deliver us. It is reasonable we should spread our wants before the Lord in secret, because many of them are such, that he alone can supply them by his immediate interposition; and there are many of them we do not choose, and indeed ought not, to communicate to others. Every man doth, or should, know the plague of his own heart; the irregularities of his temper and thoughts; what corruptions ought to be subdued in him; in what graces he is defective, and from what temptations he is most in danger; and these he is to spread before the Lord, and entreat suitable help. It is our duty to devote ourselves to God's service, as well as to be the devoted servants of men; and every one hath some reasons peculiar to himself why he should do it. This should be a personal act. He should enter into solemn covenant with God in his closet, as well as in the public assembly. It is reasonable he should do this, as an expression of gratitude to God for all his mercies, and the means of keeping him stedfast to his duty. What is said in public prayer, and acts of dedication to God, cannot possibly be suited to every particular case. It is therefore reasonable that every man should yield himself to God in private, as he knows his own case and circumstances; and from consciousness, feeling, and experience, can best express his own wants, desires, and purposes. Let me just add, that prayer is highly reasonable, as a means of religion. If the end be most weighty and important, it is reasonable that the most likely means to attain it should be constantly used. Prayer is the appointed means of deriving all spiritual supplies from above, to support the life of religion; and therefore it is reasonable, and our duty, to make use of it; just as it is reasonable, and every man's duty, to eat and drink, because he cannot otherwise live.

2. The scripture strongly enjoins it both by precepts and examples. It gives us a variety of commands and directions relating to prayer in general; and there appears great evidence, that all kinds of prayer are comprehended under these general directions. For instance, we are commanded to "pour out our hearts before God;" to "call upon his name;" to "pray without ceasing;" to "pray always, and not to faint;" to "pray every where;" to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." We have many directions relating to the particular parts of prayer; as adoring God's excellencies, giving thanks to him for his mercies, confessing our sins, and entreating his favour. So that you see from these short hints, and I hope you know from your acquaintance with the bible, that it is a duty

much insisted upon. Many general hints are given us of the frequency with which it should be performed. There are two passages which I would particularly recommend to your regard. The apostle directs us to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints."* Where the expression of "all prayer and supplication," must undoubtedly include secret as well as public and family prayer. The other text is, "Be careful, or anxious, for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;"† where it seems very probable, that he chiefly refers to secret prayer, since he proposes it as a remedy against anxiety, and those uneasy cares that are most of them of a personal kind, and which prey upon the mind. In the former discourse we showed how strongly our text enjoins secret prayer, as containing directions for the proper performance of it, and a promise to encourage us in it. Nay, such stress is laid upon prayer in scripture, that it is sometimes put for the whole of religion; as when it is said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." All those passages of scripture, which require purity, goodness, holiness, obedience, and likeness to God, do in effect require prayer; as, in other places, it is described as the means of promoting them. Let it be further considered, that in the scripture Jesus Christ is represented as our Mediator, through whom our prayers are to be offered, and who intercedeth for us. And the Spirit is promised, as the "Spirit of supplication," to "help our infirmities," and make intercession in us, by exciting suitable desires in our hearts. This evidently proves that prayer is our duty. And as the influences of the Spirit are promised to all true Christians, to assist and regulate their desires, and not confined to ministers, and those that lead the devotions of others, it seems a plain intimation that every Christian is to pray by himself. I add further, that the best commentary upon these texts, and what shows that they relate to private as well as social prayer, is scripture examples; the account we have there, of the secret devotions of those who were most eminent for piety and goodness. And here it may be observed in general, that it is represented as the character of good men, that they "walk with God," which implies friendship and mutual converse. They are described as "the generation of them that seek him;" as those that "call upon the name of the Lord." Every one that is godly is described as "praying to God." But besides these characteristics, we have many particular examples of secret prayer, that I must but just mention. We have frequent instances of this in Abraham; and in his servant, when he went to fetch Rebecca; of Isaac going out to meditate and pray in the field; of Jacob's weeping and making sup-

* Eph. vi. 18. † Phil. iv. 6.

plication, when alone, in his way to Bethel. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, Noah, Daniel, and Job, are all described as men of prayer; powerful intercessors with God for others. David is the most signal instance of this in the Old Testament. He tells us that he prayed evening, morning, and noon; that he arose at midnight to give thanks, and would pray to God "seven times a day," that is, often; and that he "gave himself to prayer." Daniel prayed and made supplication when alone. The pious Jews had oratories or houses of prayer. They sometimes offered up their private prayers at the temple, during the morning and evening sacrifices, and, wherever they were, prayed at that time. Thus Hannah prayed at the tabernacle; and "the whole multitude were praying without at the time of incense."* We have several instances of private prayer in the New Testament; particularly that of Cornelius, who, though a gentile, and a soldier too, was a devout man.† Peter went up to the house-top to pray, choosing that place for privacy. We find Paul praying in the temple; and speaking, in a variety of places, in a very humble and instructive manner, of his own prayers, of his "every prayer," "in all his prayers," and the like. He often entreats that his Christian friends would remember him in their prayers; a plain intimation that he knew they practised this duty. But the most eminent instance of them all was our blessed Lord and Master himself. We read frequently of his retiring to pray; sometimes to a mountain; sometimes to the wilderness; sometimes to another private place, and particularly to the garden of a friend. He rose early before day to converse with his Father; retired at night for the same blessed work; yea, continued all night in an oratory devoted to God, or, as we render it, in prayer to God. He was very fervent in his devotions; and sometimes offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears. In short, to which of the saints will you turn, who have not practised this duty? All good people in every age have made conscience of it; and to this there is an evident reference in that beautiful description of an angel, "standing at the altar of incense before the throne, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints."‡ So that if we have any regard to the authority of God, and the judgment and practice of the wisest and best men that ever were in the world, we must allow secret prayer to be a duty, and the neglect of it must be highly criminal.

3. It is accompanied with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction; greater and nobler than is to be found in any other work or enjoyment. I would not debase my subject by comparing it with animal or sensual pleasures. That public worship is delightful, and a day in God's courts better than a thousand, I hope my own experience abundantly testifieth. And it is far from my design to depreciate that, or to set up one religious duty in

* Luke i. 10. † Acts. x. 21. ‡ Rev. viii. 3.

competition with another. But the pleasure of secret worship is, on some accounts, superior to that of public. Then, as Job expresseth it, "we come near to God, even to his seat, order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments." There is pleasure in every part of it. In all religious worship there is the pleasure of contemplating the most glorious Being in the universe. The mind is entertained with the view of his matchless perfections and excellencies. We see indeed the glory of God in all his works and operations; and this is pleasant; just as we see the light of the sun reflected from every object round us, and filling the whole compass of our sight with cheerfulness. But the direct contemplation of God in our most serious moments is abundantly more delightful; as beholding the body of the sun would be to an eye capable of bearing its lustre. The pleasures of friendship are more noble and sublime than any sensual enjoyments. How great must the pleasure be of having fellowship with God, in the exercises of gratitude, love, and hope towards him, and the communication of his enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences to us. This is what we mean by "having communion with God;" our exercising gratitude, love, submission, hope; and receiving enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences from him by his Spirit. The enjoyment of a single friend in secret, where there is the utmost freedom, openness, and exchange of mutual affection, is more delightful than the society of many friends together, where the pleasures of converse are sometimes interrupted, and the affections as it were divided. There is a sweet though mournful satisfaction, in confessing our sins before God, as a pitying and merciful Father, and uttering the genuine language of godly sorrow. There is pleasure in committing our way to the Lord, casting all our cares upon him, and expressing our firm dependence on his kind providence and precious promises. Besides, in secret prayer we can use more liberty than in social; and therefore it is peculiarly pleasant. We can pour out our whole hearts before God; our particular wants, sins, and sorrows. We can tell him of the secret workings of pride and passion, envy and covetousness; and intreat his help. We are sure he understands us right, knows our meaning, and discerns our desires. We may trust him with those secrets that it would not be proper to trust our most intimate friends with, and there is not one complaint or desire but we may represent before him. This eases the soul, and gives it great and sweet satisfaction. Nay, there may be burdens upon the mind, that we know not how to express, yet humbly and devoutly groan under; and this our groaning is not hid from him. We can use greater freedom of expression in secret. And though we should be careful to maintain a strict decorum even there; yet God allows us full liberty of speech at his throne, and is not so critical as men are.

He understands the language of a groan and a sigh, and is pleased with it, when proceeding from a devout heart. Nor is it an inconsiderable advantage, that in secret we may use what posture and manner of address we please; and "our Father, who seeth in secret," will accept us. In the closet we are in no danger of being censured as hypocrites and enthusiasts, for any extraordinary marks of elevated devotion; though, like our Master, we prostrate ourselves on the ground, lift up our hands and eyes, and pour out strong cries and tears. The fear of such censures often cramps the devotion of ministers and private Christians in social prayer. But those emotions, which souls less pious and tender may censure and dislike God will not despise. It adds to the pleasure of secret devotion, and indeed to its advantage, that it may be performed with greater fixedness of thought, and freedom from distraction, than social prayer. With all our care vain thoughts will intrude; and the closet is not a privileged place. But we are less liable to them in secret than in public. Some noise or motion, and especially the rude and indecent behaviour of some in coming late, and of others in paying ill timed, ill mannerly compliments to their acquaintance at church, will disturb us, and call off our thoughts from what we are about. But in the closet, when the door is shut, we are generally free from outward distractions; and a sense of our Father's seeing in secret will be likely to restrain the inward ones. Further, in our secret devotions we can make some pauses; think of the Being we are addressing, the work in which we are engaged; chide our hearts when they begin to wander, and stir up the sacred fire when it seems to be going out. And this contributes greatly to the pleasure of our worship. Add to all this, that God is often pleased to afford his devout servants some delightful manifestations of his glory and grace. He owns them as his children, by his Spirit witnessing with theirs; and thus seals them to the day of redemption. I conclude this head with the words of Bishop Burnet, "Let the world laugh at prayer, and all earnestness in it, at much as they will; yet good men will ever find it to be the source of all their joys, and feel an unspeakable ease and pleasure, even in pouring out their hearts before God." I have expatiated so long on this pleasing subject, that I have left myself very little time to illustrate the fourth argument, which I would urge to the practice of this duty, namely,

4. It is attended with great and glorious advantages. All prayer is so. Accordingly David observes, "It is good for me to draw near unto God." Right notions of God are the foundation of all religion. Now prayer tends to promote in our hearts a just idea of his being and authority, his omniscience, power, wisdom, and goodness. It tends to keep up a sense of God in the mind, and engage us to act "as seeing him who is

invisible;" which is the grand principle that supports the life of religion in the soul. We can scarce forget a friend, with whom we converse every morning and evening; especially if he hath given us something in charge. Seriously recollecting that God seeth in secret, and solemnly addressing him in secret, will tend to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long; promote an habitual veneration for him; it will cherish the love of God, which is the first and great commandment; it will guard us against the impressions of temptation; promote in us a cautious watchfulness to suppress every passion and inclination, and avoid every action, which he will be displeased with. A remembrance that he seeth in secret, which private prayer keeps up, will lead us to make conscience even of our thoughts, and to restrain the loose and disorderly sallies of the imagination, by which much guilt is contracted. If we govern our thoughts in the exercise of secret prayer, without which it is no prayer, it will help us to govern them at other times, and to keep an habitual command over them. It will regulate all our passions, and so promote our comfort, credit, and usefulness. Secret prayer tends to call off our thoughts from the world. The nearer we get to God, to the greater distance will the world remove. It will moderate our desires and pursuits of earthly things, while it makes us prudent, diligent, and upright. He that habitually asketh the divine blessing will not neglect proper means to obtain it, nor venture to go out of the way of his duty. A quick taste of intellectual and devout pleasures will make it easy to deny ourselves the hurtful pleasures of sense. Men inordinately love company, diversions, and amusements, because they have no relish for prayer. Secret devotion will regulate our desires; help us to know whether they are just and good, or not; whether our business and our diversions are lawful. The true test of this is, whether we can, with a good conscience, ask God's blessing upon them. Secret prayer will lighten all our burdens, be heart's-ease under troubles, and cure those anxieties and fears, which are ready to divide and discompose our hearts. Having committed our way to the Lord, being conscious of his presence, and having a cheerful hope of his accepting our addresses, will calm the mind, and keep it in perfect peace. Thus we shall derive strength for all the duties and difficulties of life, and shall find that divine grace will be sufficient for us. Let me add, that secret devotion is the best preparative for public worship. The person that daily converseth with God in secret, is in little danger of losing the impressions of religion, or needing much time to recall his thoughts, and bring his heart into a proper frame for social worship; and he is best disposed to concur in it, and improve by it. A solemn address to God every morning tends to fit the soul for the work and temptations of the day. One of the greatest philosophers of this age,

I mean Doctor Boerhaave, being asked by a friend, who had often admired his patience under great provocations, by what means he suppressed his anger, being naturally quick of resentment, answered that "he had by daily prayer and meditation mastered himself. It was his daily practice to retire for an hour in the morning, and spend it in private prayer and meditation, and it gave him spirit and vigour for the business of the day." This therefore he recommended as the best rule of life; the best advice he ever gave. To retire again in the evening, to review our conduct through the day, to ask forgiveness, help, and protection, is the best soporific in the world. It tends to compose the thoughts to peace, to keep out all loose and idle fancies in sleep, and make our very dreams have a tincture of reason and goodness; and we may cheerfully hope that God will sustain us. Finally, secret prayer tends to fit the soul for heaven, which is a state of everlasting nearness to God and friendship with him. That these and many other advantages attend it, is, I think, plain from the reason of the thing, the natural influence of the duty, and the many promises of hearing prayer, which God hath given us in the scripture, which I need not here particularly cite; and it also appears from the experience of his people. In short, there is no true religion without it; no keeping up the life and power of religion without a regular, serious performance of it. Nor do I think there is a truer or more important observation in practical religion than this, that "the most devout Christians are, in every other respect, the most thriving and eminent Christians."

I entreat your serious recollection of these things, and diligent performance of this most important duty. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

ADMONITIONS AND DIRECTIONS CONCERNING SECRET PRAYER.

MATTHEW VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

IT is an observation of Mr. Philip Henry, that "apostasy begins at the closet-door." As the source of all irreligion and wickedness is forgetfulness of God, and not setting him before us; so

* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

the first sign of a man being disposed to religion and the service of God is betaking himself to prayer; "Behold, he prayeth."* And as a religious concern first shows itself in secret prayer; so the first symptom of declension, the first step to apostasy, is the neglect or careless performance of it. As these general observations are founded on reason, scripture, and experience, they abundantly justify me, in making repeated attempts to fix upon your hearts a just sense of the importance and necessity of secret prayer, and quicken you to the regular, serious, and fervent discharge of this duty.

I have already considered the manner of performing this duty, as enjoined in the text, and the arguments which our Lord urgeth to engage us to it. In the last discourse, I proposed some further motives and arguments with the same view; particularly, that it is a duty highly reasonable in itself; strongly and frequently recommended in scripture, by precepts and examples; it is accompanied with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction; and attended with great and glorious advantages. I now proceed,

IV. *To the application of the subject;* by addressing to you some admonitions, directions, cautions, and encouragements, grounded on what hath been said, and suited to your respective circumstances. I would address

1. An admonition to those who are negligent in the performance of this duty; who omit it entirely, or frequently; or discharge it in a formal, careless manner. With such persons I would now expostulate, and endeavour to convince them of their folly and wickedness. I would first admonish those who omit this duty entirely; who live without God in the world, forgetful of him "in whom they live, and move, and have their being." They go out and come in, lie down and rise up, eat and drink, work and play, without any serious sense of God upon their minds or devout addresses to him, and are, in this respect, like the beasts that perish. Consider, sirs, what a high affront and indignity this is to the blessed God; to him who gave you being; who continues your life and all its comforts; and on whom it entirely depends, whether you shall live a moment longer, or if you should, whether you shall enjoy one other moment of ease and comfort. Can any thing be more absurd and irrational, than to act as if you had nothing to do with this great and glorious Being; as if you had nothing to hope or to fear from him? Can any thing show a baser disposition, than to be unjust, disobedient, and disrespectful to the blessed and only Potentate; to deny him his due, to put contempt upon his natural and revealed law, both which require prayer; to be always in his presence, always receiving tokens of his favour, and yet never acknowledge

* Acts x. 11.

his greatness and goodness? Perhaps this is the character of some of you, who are genteel and polite; whose manners and language are refined, and partake nothing of vulgar rudeness. But how can you reconcile it, to treat men with decency and civility, and God with neglect; to salute all about you with their proper distinctions, yet never address God in prayer; to pay regular visits to your acquaintance, and yet make no visits to the mercy-seat; to pay your honours to men, and yet never bow your knees before the Majesty of heaven? The neglect of secret prayer is a sure sign that there is no religion in the heart. "Prayers," says a Mahometan writer, "are the pillars of religion; and they that forsake prayer, forsake religion." It is impossible that a man should be good, who neglects secret prayer; and next to impossible that he should ever become so. The neglect of prayer shows that you have no right notions of God, no sense of his presence, no hearty desires of his mercy, no solid hope of his favour. Attending public worship is the outward form of the religious life. But if there be no daily devout exercises of the soul in retirement and converse with God; no seasons allotted for reading, self-examination, meditation, and prayer, you cannot be true Christians. For, pray, consider, and ask yourselves, what brings you to church? Why do you attend public worship? Is it not because men observe you, and you would forfeit their good opinion if you neglected it? Was it out of regard to the authority and honour of God, and your improvement in religion, would not the same principle lead you to address him in secret? You do not pray in secret, because no fellow-creature is present; and doth not this show, that you love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and are hypocrites in heart? Accordingly, this is laid down as a characteristic of a hypocrite, "Thou casteth off fear, and restrainest prayer before God."* In short, there never was, there never can be, such a person in the world, as a prayerless good man. We may as well talk of an ungodly saint, an honest cheat, or a sober sot, as a prayerless Christian. And can you be content to live in this neglect of God, this state of enmity against him, when his word declareth that "they who are far from God shall perish?" You are perhaps convinced of the reasonableness of this duty; but you are so hurried with worldly business and cares, that you cannot find time for it. This is a sad sign that you "mind earthly things;" that you are "men of the world, who have their portion in this life." You can find time to wait upon your customers and friends; but you cannot find time to wait upon God. You can find time for visits, reading news, idle chat, and amusements; but can find no time to converse with God. The true reason is, you have not the fear of God before your eyes, and are alienated from the life of God,

* Job xv. 4.

through blindness or perverseness of heart. God will soon find you time to be sick and to die. Then you will wish you had prayed. You will pray then, but it may be too late.

I would address the admonition to those who often neglect this duty. Though their consciences will not allow them to live in the total omission of it, yet they practise it but now and then; on the Lord's day, perhaps; just before and after a sacrament, or on occasion of some extraordinary mercy and deliverance, or distress and affliction. This is not the conduct of a child of God, who loveth his duty, and to whom it is natural and pleasant; but the conduct of a slave, who acts out of fear. It is to be apprehended that you are hypocrites; for of such it is said, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"* Your visits at the throne of grace, sirs, are not the visits of intimate friends, but of strangers or general acquaintance, between whom there is no love and confidence. Let me admonish those who neglect secret prayer on trifling occasions; when business, company, or amusement call. That is a sad charge which is brought against the Jews, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel!"† Remember that you must be judged for omissions. They are extremely dangerous. One neglect makes way for another. Men first omit secret prayer now and then, on what they imagine an important occasion; afterwards for a smaller matter. Thus they contract a disrelish for it; it is a force upon them to return to it. Then they begin to be less afraid of sin, less watchful against temptation, less careful about other branches of duty. So their neglect "increases to more ungodliness;" and it is well if it do not end in utter forgetfulness of God, and by consequence in utter ruin.

Finally, let me admonish those who, though constant in this duty, yet often perform it in a cold, formal manner. I fear we all need an admonition on this head. The Lord pardon me, that I need it so much myself! I fear those words of the prophet are applicable to many acts of devotion, "Thou art near in their mouths, but far from their hearts."‡ We often pray without life and fervour. It is a mere bodily exercise. But consider, brethren, do we not believe that the God whom we address "seeth in secret?" And shall we affront him, by making that address only the labour of the lip and the knee? Can we expect that God should hear us when we do not hear ourselves? that he should grant the blessings which we never truly desire, and only ask by rote, while our thoughts are otherwise employed? Let us guard against such a pernicious practice, which defeats all the good ends of devotion. I wish I could write upon all your memories and hearts this maxim, (may God by his Spirit write it there!) that "the power of god-

* Job xxvii. 10. † Isa. xliii. 22. ‡ Jer. xii. 2.

liness withers and declines in proportion to the degree in which secret devotion is neglected, or negligently performed."* I now proceed to offer,

2. Some directions for the more regular and useful performance of it: more particularly with regard to the season, time, and manner of it. My first direction is, and I think I have a divine warrant for it, that secret prayer be performed every day; and, at least, twice a day. This seems reasonable in itself. The revolution of day and night point out to us the propriety of some solemn acknowledgment of God every morning and evening. Besides, we have particular mercies to be thankful for, and particular favours to seek, every morning and every night. God appointed, under the law of Moses, that there should be a lamb offered and incense burnt every day, both in the morning and evening, at the door of the tabernacle; where he promised to meet the children of Israel and bless them. At these times they offered up their private prayers. And there seems to be a reference to this in the New Testament, where we are commanded to "pray without ceasing;" to "offer up the sacrifice of prayer and praise continually;" and the like. "It is a good thing," saith the psalmist, "to speak of thy loving kindness every morning, and thy faithfulness every night." This has been the practice of good men. Nor will a less frequent performance of this duty be sufficient to preserve an habitual veneration for God, a stated sense of his presence, and a prevailing care to please him. Let me ask praying Christians this question, Whether they do not find converse with God every morning and evening little enough to do this; and whether they do not think it is proper, and will be advantageous, to take if possible a short interval at noon, just before or after dinner, to recollect the thoughts, to bring a sense of God to the mind, and address his throne? We find no great inconvenience in laying aside our business three or four times a day to eat and drink; and is not the life more than meat, and the soul more than the life? Will the spiritual life be supported with less care and pains than the animal life? We should find the advantage of resolving with David, "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray;" and with Daniel, even while he was prime-minister, praying three times a day. One of Peter's times of prayer was noon. And this is more necessary for men of great business, because they are in most danger of losing the thoughts of God amidst the cares of the world. As to the particular hours, they must be left to every one's discretion. It may be sufficient to say that in the morning the sooner we retire for prayer, the better. Then the thoughts are more lively: the

* "I am never easy or satisfied with that worship of God, in which I do not find my soul raised to a frame some way suitable to it, and to some fervour of affection."—Abernethy.

mind has not been tinctured with the world. If it be deferred, some business may come in to prevent it, or oblige us to hurry it over, without sufficient time to make a serious work of it. And this, by the way, shows the necessity of keeping regular hours, and rising early. We shall make little of devotion without it. Servants and men of business had need to redeem their morning time for this work: and say with David, "Thou art my God, early will I seek thee." Let prayer be performed in the evening before it be late, and you grow drowsy and unfit for it. It will be proper to pay your evening sacrifice before you go to an evening visit or friendly meeting. It will tend to preserve you from the temptations of levity, intemperance, and every other irregularity. But, remember, it is better to pray late than not at all. In a word, if we do not fix upon certain hours, and periodical returns of devotion; engaging ourselves by firm resolution, and inuring ourselves by constant usage to the strict observation of them; secluding from them, as from sacred inclosures, all other business, we shall be dangerously tempted to neglect devotion.* We shall be listless to it, prone to defer it, and easily seduced from it by the encroachments of other business, or the enticements of other pleasures. Let it be a rule and resolution with us never to neglect it. And if we cannot be lively, let us be sincere and serious. Let me further exhort you, under this part of my directions, to allow your children and servants proper time for religious retirement. Exhort them to observe and improve these seasons. Furnish them with proper books of devotion for their use, and narrowly observe whether they embrace the seasons you allot to them, and attend to this important part of duty. Having said thus much about the time, I would offer you some directions relating to the manner of performing secret prayer. And here, not to repeat what I said in a former discourse concerning the privacy of the place, the avoiding ostentation, and remembering the eye of God upon you, I would exhort that previous reading and reflection be made use of. Let the scriptures be constantly read. Choose the plainest and most devotional parts; as the psalms, the evangelists, and the practical parts of the epistles. This will help you to fix your thoughts, supply you with proper expressions, and be serviceable to excite devout affections in your hearts. Accustom yourselves also to some previous meditation. Consider the design of entering into your closet; the greatness, goodness, and omniscience of your Father who seeth in secret; the importance of the errand on which you are approaching him, even to beg the life of your souls; that your prayers may not be customary and formal, without meaning, life, and design. Think every morning of the mercies of the night, your comfortable accommodations, repose, health, peace, and the like. Think

* Barrow.

what business you have to do, what wants to be supplied, what difficulties and temptations you may meet with, through the day; and spread each before the Lord. Recollect these things in the evening: renew your prayers for pardon, assistance, and protection. Whatever may be said in favour of forms of prayer in public and family worship, I must think they are highly improper and inconvenient in secret worship. And, indeed, some of the warmest advocates for forms have allowed that free prayer is most proper in secret. Let those that cannot do without, use forms. But let them not confine themselves entirely to them; but vary and add, as their circumstances require. It is impossible that any prayer-book should suit every complaint and every sorrow which the soul wants to pour out before God. A devout Christian cannot content himself to wrap up his dearest and most important concerns in a few general sentences. It would be quenching the Spirit of God, and injuring his own pleasure and profit. I must remind you of what I have before suggested, that it is no prayer which doth not proceed from the heart. It is our duty to worship God in spirit and in truth; to take care that we do not trifle in the presence of the eternal Jehovah. To pray without some fixedness of thought and sincerity of heart, is really taking the name of the Lord our God in vain. Let us then "engage our hearts to approach to God;" "stir up ourselves to take hold on him," and "call upon all that is within us to praise his holy name." Make some pauses; think what you are about; ask yourselves, Is this prayer? Is this a rational, spiritual service? Will God be pleased with this kind of worship? Fix your dependence on the Spirit of God, to help your infirmities: and begin every act of devotion with earnestly entreating God's presence and assistance; that he would supply you with suitable thoughts, expressions, and affections. Remember to bear upon your mind the concerns of the public and the church of God; and be found among those who mourn in secret for the abominations of our land, and seek its peace and welfare. Remember also, in all your prayers, to maintain a believing regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator, in whose name you are to pray, and through whose hand you are to expect mercy. Content not yourself with mentioning his name at the close; but in the whole service, consider him as your advocate with the Father, and by him offer all your spiritual sacrifices. When the duty is ended, recollect how it was performed; that you may be humbled, or satisfied and thankful, as the case shall require. It will be proper and advisable to read over a psalm or hymn, and sing it with a distinct and low voice, and thus make melody in your hearts to the Lord. These are the most important directions I have to give, relating to secret prayer; and I am persuaded an observance of them will contribute to the pleasure of your

devotions, and make them the instruments of your growth in grace, and meetness for heaven. Fellowship with God must be begun on earth; and they only can be fit to dwell in his heavenly presence, who have contracted and maintained a holy intimacy with him, and lived near to him here below. I would now suggest,

3. Some cautions relating to this subject. And I would, in the first place, solemnly caution you against every thing that would indispose or unfit you for devotional exercises; particularly against too much worldly business, care, and anxiety. Those that are eager to be rich, and determined to leave their families wealthy, can scarce be men of devotion, for their thoughts are all taken up with earthly things; or if they do steal a few moments for secret prayer, it is almost impossible but their business and cares will follow them to their closets, and interrupt this divine work. I must caution you against excess of eating and drinking, the love of gaming, pleasures, and diversions; since each of these overcharges the mind, unfits it for converse with God, and renders it almost utterly incapable of spiritual work. I must caution you likewise against passion, anger, resentment, and meditating on injuries received. You can never pray comfortably and acceptably, unless the mind be calm, and you "lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting." I would humbly caution devout Christians, though it is a caution that few in the present day need, that they consider their own frame and circumstances in life, and not protract their devotions to an unreasonable length. This will break in upon their necessary business, fatigue their animal spirits, and so lessen the pleasure and advantage of this blessed work. I exhort them to remember that "every thing is beautiful in its season;" and that it is the character of a wise man to "order all his affairs," religious as well as civil, "with discretion." But the most important caution is, that you live suitably to your prayers, and let all the world see that you are the better for them. When Moses had been in the mount, in a state of the greatest nearness to God, and most intimate converse with him that any creature was ever admitted to; when he was come down to the people, they observed that his face shone with an unusual, surprising lustre. The Israelites did not know particularly what had passed; but they knew, by this circumstance, that he had been with God. Thus should a lustre of holiness appear in the whole of our conversation, and our lives should show what hath passed in secret. It is horrible hypocrisy to ask one thing and act another; to beg the forgiveness of sin, and yet persist in it; to pray for assistance in performing such and such duties, and yet never perform them; to ask the divine blessing, and yet never take the proper, the appointed means to obtain it. Remember that prayer, important as it is, is not the *whole* of religion. It is designed to

make us holy in all manner of conversation. May God write upon all our hearts that most weighty and solemn declaration, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* And that of Solomon, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." If we are not faithful and resolute in doing our duty, and endeavouring to resemble God, in vain do we worship him. It is but a compliment, yea, a solemn mockery. If men are sottish, contentious, niggardly, morose, and unsociable; if they are fretful, murmuring, and complaining; if they are proud and haughty, and say to others, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou;" theirs is a false devotion; it cannot proceed from true principles, nor be acceptable to God. To talk of devotion, and enjoying much of God in the closet, and to come down among men peevish and fretful; or immediately to betray a carnal and covetous, or a haughty and untractable spirit; these are things of so inconsistent a nature, that the succeeding iniquity spoils the devotion, and almost destroys the pretence to any sublime degree of it. Such persons had need look well to themselves, and make a diligent search whether their hearts be sincere with God or no; whether they do not build all their hopes upon flashy efforts of animal nature, coupled with the thoughts of some sacred object, and tacked on by a divine meditation.† Nothing but an increase of holiness will effectually prove that you have been with God. I shall conclude the subject with,

4. Some encouragements to devout Christians. Recollect, my beloved, what was said under the two first general heads, concerning your Father's seeing in secret, the tender regard and affection he hath for his praying servants, and his intention to reward them openly by improving their graces in this world, and conferring distinguished honour upon them in another. I would exhort you, my aged friends, not to be discouraged if you find the ardour of devotion abate in advancing years. All the affections grow weaker as the bodily powers decay; and oftentimes the faculties of the mind, the understanding, and the memory, decay with them. You may really enjoy as much of God, and find as great profit by prayer, as you did in earlier life, when you were more enlarged and affected in it. Be not therefore weary in well-doing; but pray always, and not faint. When you make conscience of this duty, and perform it heartily as unto the Lord, it will be a comfortable evidence of your integrity before God. I apprehend the surest test of a man's real character is what passeth in retirement. "There is," says a pious writer,‡ "scarce any trial of uprightness more sure and undeceiving than a general relish for, and constant application to, the unseen parts of religion. In other actions, a man may be secretly swayed by the good opinion of the world. But in religious

* Psalm lxvi. 18. † Watts. ‡ Grove.

privacy, what is it can make men serious and in good earnest, but a sincere desire of approving themselves to the Searcher of all hearts? If your desires after God are strong, and your hearts united to fear and love him in these exercises, it is a sign that the fear and love of God govern your hearts. And this, in concurrence with a holy life, which I cannot but think doth almost inseparably accompany it, is a proof of a new nature, and a saving change." Judge yourself by this test. It will afford you comfort to be able to appeal to God, that you have made conscience of secret duties, and laboured with your hearts to perform them sincerely and devoutly. A person now with God told me on his dying bed, that his natural temper was not the best, and that he had been guilty of many sins and follies. "But," saith he, "that place," pointing to his closet, "is witness to my humble prayers and converse with God, and the pains I have taken to subdue my temper, and train up myself for that world to which I hope, through grace, I am going!" But it is time to conclude this discourse and subject. I have endeavoured, sirs, to convince you of your duty to pray to your Father in secret. I have done nothing if you are not convinced. But I think I have said what will make your consciences charge and reproach you, if you will not practise it; and reduce you to the state of that wicked servant who "knew his Lord's will, and did it not;" and therefore was "beaten with many stripes." But I hope some of you are convinced, and will not any longer neglect so important and necessary a duty; and that devout Christians will, with greater diligence and zeal, proceed in this delightful work. If you think you are under any obligations to your ministers for their labours of love, I beg, on their behalf and my own, that in your most serious moments, when you are in your closets and nearest to God, you would bear us upon your hearts, and offer up a few fervent petitions for us, who greatly need them, highly value them, and most affectionately return them.

SIX DISCOURSES

ON

FAMILY WORSHIP.

DISCOURSE I.

THE NATURE OF FAMILY WORSHIP, AND THE OBLIGATIONS TO IT FROM PRINCIPLES OF REASON.

ACTS x. 2.

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

THIS is the character of Cornelius; and a noble character it is. What makes it more remarkable is, that he was a heathen and a soldier. He was a "a devout man," a worshipper of the true God; he "feared" him, and made a conscience of "praying to him alway;" he was very charitable to the people among whom he lived. It is likewise observed, that he "feared God with all his house," which plainly intimates that his family was a worshipping family. His pious care in praying with them, and for them, and teaching them the fear of God, was successful to make them devout and pious; so we read (v. 7) of "a devout soldier that waited on him continually," was, in modern language, the captain's own man. This example of the personal and family religion of a heathen and a soldier, will, I hope, appear very proper to introduce an important design I have before me; namely, to lay before you at large the nature and obligations of family worship, and endeavour to excite you to the practice of it. You will bear me witness, that I do not curiously pry into the affairs of your families; but it is easy to know, and almost impossible not to know, from children, servants, neighbours, or others, who for a longer or shorter time reside in your houses, whether there be family worship there: and indeed were a minister to make a particular inquiry of them, or yourselves, about it, he could not be reckoned impertinent, but must appear to act in character. In some families there is no more acknowledgment of God, in the exercises

of devotion, than if there were no such being. In the families of others, he is indeed sometimes acknowledged, but very seldom; on the Lord's day, perhaps, or on some particular occasion. So criminal a neglect it becomes me to reprove, and attempt to engage you to rectify. There may be some young persons who have lately entered upon families of their own, and others soon may; for their sakes, likewise, I engage in this design: and I hope what will be said upon this subject may assist pious families to be stedfast and serious in the practice of this duty, and to improve these religious exercises to those excellent purposes, for which they are required of us. As it is a duty of great importance, on which the honour of God, the support of religion, and the good of souls, very much depend, I would plead its cause very seriously: and, that what I say may, by the blessing of God, be effectual, I would say it in the plainest and most intelligible language. I shall make no scruple to adopt the sentiments, and sometimes the language, of the best writers upon the subjects, whom I have carefully perused for that purpose; a method not less laborious to myself, and more respectful to my hearers, than to have confined myself entirely to my own thoughts on the subject. These things being premised, I propose,

I. To illustrate the nature of family worship;

II. To show you the reasonableness of it;

III. Produce the scripture evidence for it;

IV. Represent the great advantages of it;

V. I propose to consider, and endeavour to remove, the chief excuses which are made for the neglect of it;

VI. Seriously to urge the duty upon those who have hitherto neglected it;

VII. And, in the last place, to offer some advices and encouragements to those who practise it.

Let me entreat, my brethren, your serious regard to what I shall address to you on this weighty subject; and your earnest prayers that God would assist and succeed me in this design for his glory, and your and your families' welfare. I am,

I. *To illustrate the nature of family worship.*

And on this head I need say very little. I shall endeavour to prove that it is the duty of every head of a family daily to offer up serious solemn addresses to God, with his whole family, in their presence and with their concurrence: I say *every* head of a family, including widows, and single persons, who have children or servants under their care, as part of their family. It is a duty that belongs to the head of a family, as its head, and being invested with authority over the rest, by the great Lord of all, for their good. The whole of family religion is not to be placed in acts of worship, properly so called. It includes

family government and discipline; the daily reading of th scriptures to them, and at some times, especially on the Lord ' day, other practical books; watching over the ways of ou household, catechizing children, instructing servants; reproving' admonishing, and correcting for irregularities of temper and conduct; and more especially for sins against God. But family worship is the most important part, and will have a great influence to promote the regular and useful discharge of the rest. Family worship includes the several branches of prayer; a solemn adoration of the great God; giving him the glory of his perfections and government of the world; acknowledging his authority, righteousness, and goodness, and confessing our sins before him: it includes offering up our desires to him for those blessings and mercies we want; grounded on a persuasion of our ignorance, weakness, and inability to help ourselves, and his boundless power, wisdom, and goodness. It comprehends, likewise, a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies; owing our dependence upon him, and obligations to him, for all the blessings and comforts relating to this life and that which is to come. These remarks are applicable to all acts of worship, whether in the closet, the family, or the congregation. But in order to render our family worship properly so, it ought to have a special regard to the state and circumstances of the family by which it is presented, and be suited to their cases: particular thanksgivings and petitions should be offered up, by the heads of families, for themselves, their children and servants, according to their respective circumstances. But this duty is so plain and clear, that it needs not be further illustrated; the difficulty is, to bring men to the practice of it. I proceed therefore,

II. *To show the reasonableness of it.*

And under this head, I shall confine myself, chiefly, to what the light of nature suggests upon this subject; that law which was written upon men's hearts by their Creator, on which revelation is founded, by which it is confirmed, and with which it is always consistent. This law arises from the relation in which man stands to God and his dependence upon him. Now reason suggests that it is our duty to reverence our superiors; and therefore that the highest reverence is due to God, our Creator and supreme ruler; the Being on whom we have a constant, necessary dependence; and who gives and continues to us those powers and faculties by which we are capable of worshipping him. We may now take it for granted, as an allowed truth, that God is to be worshipped by every rational creature singly, or in his personal capacity; that men are to meet together, and worship their common father, friend, and benefactor, in a public manner. The same reasons that have often been urged to prove secret and public worship to be necessary duties, will, in general, be equally

strong for family worship. But the reasonableness of it will more particularly appear from considering the relation of a family, as such, to God; their mutual relation to one another; the relation of the head to the several members of the family; and their relation to the world; and all these will be confirmed by the practice of the heathen. I argue,

1. From the relation of a family to the great God. And here these thoughts will occur; that families are societies constituted and appointed by him, and favoured with special advantages and opportunities for worshipping him, and therefore ought to do it.

Families are societies constituted and appointed by the great God himself, and therefore ought to worship him. He is the founder of all families. He saw it was "not good for man to be alone," and therefore provided him a suitable companion. His providence is to be acknowledged in the social affections he hath implanted in human nature, and the provision he hath made for the regular exercise of them. It is God, who, as the psalmist expresseth it, "setteth the solitary in families,"* who buildeth up our houses, and directs men in the choice of their relations. His providence gives persons ability to keep house, and make provision for those that serve them. We and our families continually depend upon God; and whatever we do for their sustenance, support, and comfort, he is the great sustainer and preserver of them. In this respect, he is the "God of all the families of the earth." He is likewise the supreme governor of all families; as they are united by his appointment, and he exerciseth a providential government over them. He stands in a particular relation to Christian families. Accordingly it was foretold that he would be "the God of all the families of Israel,"† that is, of Christians, who are now "the Israel of God," and all related to him through Jesus Christ, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Now it is very natural to argue from hence, that there is homage and worship due to God from all families, as such. He ought to be acknowledged in this relation, as their builder, owner, and supreme master: according to his own reasoning, the son of a family honoureth his father, as a superior, and a servant his master! "If I then be a father, where is my honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts."‡ It would be strange, that a society of creatures, of which God is the author and support, should not be obliged to acknowledge that he is so, and worship him in that relation. We are obliged to honour God in every way we can; and, as social creatures, to honour him by social religion; and as families are one of those societies which he hath constituted, and, in the order of nature, the very first of them, they ought to honour him in that capacity.

* Ps. lxviii. 6. † Jer. xxxi. 1. ‡ Mal. i. 6.

This will be allowed in our personal capacity; and the argument is equally strong with regard to family religion. A person is bound to worship God, as the head of a family; that is, with it. He is capable of it, and they that belong to his family are capable of joining with him; and therefore they ought; because God has a right to all the homage we are capable of paying, consistent with the other duties he requireth of us. This reasoning is grounded upon this plain maxim, that "whatever relation providence brings a person into, he is bound to serve God in that relation;" as a king, a magistrate, a master of a family, and the like. It is further to be considered (though I fear most people never consider it) that a family is a constitution, or a society, formed, not merely for this world, but for another; as composed of rational immortal beings. "Why," saith the prophet Malachi, "did God form one man and one woman only," and unite them together as a family, but "that he might seek a godly seed?"* So that this relation was ordained, not only to continue a succession of men upon the face of the earth, but to support religion. Families were ordained to be nurseries of religion; to maintain it in the world, and hand it down from father to son, from family to family, through all generations. Now, how can this be done, without impressing the minds of families with a sense of God? and how can that be done, without solemn prayer to him? Again,

Families are furnished with special advantages and opportunities for worshipping God, and therefore ought to do it. Their nearness and convenience, their mutual society and endearment, and that regard which they ought to have for one another's comfort and happiness for both worlds, render it peculiarly expedient and highly necessary. More homage may be paid to God in this way, than in solitary worship; and therefore, as the creator and preserver of families, as well as the greatest and most excellent of beings, he ought to be worshipped by them. It is reckoned a piece of decency and good breeding for the members of a family to salute the head and master, every morning, when they first meet; and every evening, when they retire: and doth not the head and master of all families, to whom we and they are subordinate, deserve that we should, in our joint capacity, pay our homage to him? The reasonableness of family worship may be argued,

2. From the relation of the several parts of a family to one another. It is a society distinct from all others; and hath an independent government, as far as the laws of the community allow. The parts of it have a mutual relation and dependence, and are therefore under peculiar obligations to worship God. As public worship is proper and necessary, because men have a near relation to one another, and a common dependence upon God,

* Mal. ii. 15.

and because they may cherish social affections, and promote one another's piety, by such a public homage; so it is with families. For instance, if it be reasonable that every person should acknowledge the mercies he hath received from God, it is equally reasonable that family mercies should be acknowledged by the whole family together. They jointly share in the comfort, and ought to concur in the thankfulness. Are our houses safe from fear? Doth God preserve them from fire and storms, and the ravages of wicked and unreasonable men? Doth he "make a hedge about us and our houses, and all that we have on every side?" Doth he preserve us, our children, and servants, in our going out and coming in, lying down and rising up? Do we come together in the morning after our repose, and in the evening after our labours, without any distress or evil occurrence? What can be more reasonable, than that we should unite in adoring and praising our great and constant benefactor? When he spreads our table and fills our cup, we are not so far lost to a sense of religion and decency, as not to acknowledge his hand therein; and is it not equally reasonable that we should praise him for our other family blessings? Is it thought reasonable, that God should be acknowledged, when we and our families enjoy any remarkable mercy or deliverance, that we should desire thanks to be returned on that account in the public assemblies; and yet offer him no tribute of praise with our own families, though it be evidently a family mercy? I wonder men do not see the monstrous absurdity and glaring inconsistence of this neglect. If we have any sense of gratitude for God's mercies to our houses, is it reasonable that it should lie smothered in our own breasts, or only be acknowledged before God in our closets, and not with our families, who are joint-partakers with us in the mercy? Further, are there not family sins to be confessed and the pardon of them sought? Is it reasonable, is it a duty, for every man to give glory to God by confessing his own sins, and thus cherishing a sense of their evil and his resolution to avoid them? And is it not reasonable that families should concur in this work? Is there a family upon earth, in which there are not often, I might say daily, offences committed against God, and against one another, by the members of it, in their relative capacity? Is there not some ill behaviour or neglect of duty to one another, that calls them to the throne of grace, to acknowledge it, and beg the forgiveness of it? Are there not some transgressions of the rules of family enjoyments and converse; some excesses or differences, some miscarriages, some rash and provoking words uttered one against another, some unkind speeches, at least many vain and idle words, in our mutual conversation, that ought to be lamented before God? Even the best men and the best families have their sins of infirmity, that ought daily to bring them to God's footstool, as penitents and

supplicants. The high-priest among the Jews was, on the day of expiation, to make an atonement for his own sins, and for the sins of his household; and there is reason we should daily renew our application to God for ourselves and households, through the virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Further, there are family mercies and blessings to be sought; and if it is reasonable that every particular person should pray to his Father in secret, for what he wants for himself, it is reasonable a family should concur in asking what they jointly want. Every head of a family is, or should be, sensible of his own insufficiency to guide, protect, and provide for his family, without a divine blessing; and therefore ought to commend them to God, and lead them to acknowledge, with him, their entire dependence upon Providence. There are blessings which we want in common with all families; such as daily bread and the continuance of life, together with the peaceable and comfortable enjoyment of what we possess. There also blessings which particular families need. Every family hath its peculiar cares and burdens; hath affairs to manage, and an employment to pursue, in the success of which they are all jointly concerned; and therefore God ought to be sought to by them jointly. Particular families lie open to particular temptations, which they ought to pray for deliverance from or victory over. Busy families are in danger of becoming worldly-minded and forgetting the one thing needful. The rich are in danger of pride, luxury, and uncharitableness; poor or decaying families, of injustice, fraud, and discontent; mixed families, of quarrels and contentions, or a want of harmony and contrivance for the general peace and happiness. There is therefore reason that such families should not only watch, but pray, that they enter not into temptation. There are few families without frequent afflictions, which in some degree affect them all. They should therefore jointly pray that these may be removed and overruled for their good. All families have relations or friends at a distance, whom they ought, in common supplications, to commend to God; as an expression of their love and tender concern, and the means to keep up that affection which distance of place is apt to lessen. Besides all this, a family's concurrence in prayer will increase the fervour of devotion, and be more likely to engage the favourable notice and blessing of God. The reasonableness of family worship further appears,

3. From the relation of the head to the several members of a family. Heads of families are bound to worship God with them, on account of their authority over them; the love they should have for them; and out of faithfulness to them, as their trust and charge.

You have, in the first place, authority over them; an authority over your children by nature, and over your servants by their consent; and this authority was given you by the supreme Lord,

and is to be used for him. Any authority and power we have over others is a talent, or an improveable mercy, which we are entrusted with for our good; and God expects that, as stewards, we be found faithful. Why was this authority given? Not merely that they may be serviceable to the temporal, earthly interest of the family, and be compelled to do what would promote it; but that they might be made wise and good. As they are capable of being made so, it is the duty of their superiors to attempt it; and how can this be done without prayer? If you expect your servants should use their reason and understanding in serving you, and not do things mechanically as the brutes, it is your duty not to treat them like brutes, by only providing them food and habitations, but to take care of their minds; and, by reason and admonition, to form them to habits of sobriety, diligence, and good behaviour. And if it is your duty to instruct them, it is certainly your duty to pray for a blessing upon your instructions; and to do it with and before them, that it may have greater weight upon their minds. Your acquaintance with their temper and conduct gives you great advantage to direct your petitions accordingly. Thus should every head of a family show his concern for the good of all under his dominion. I argue further from your love to your family. And here there would be less occasion to make a distinction between your children and servants, if you considered the souls of your apprentices and servants as committed to your care, as well as the souls of your children; as in all reason you ought. Your interest in your children and servants, and near relation to both, claim this at your hands. You will not deny, that it is your duty to take care that they have food convenient for them; and is it not equally your duty to take care of their souls? Doth not faithfulness require the latter of you, as well as the former? A sober heathen would provide food and raiment for his children, food and wages for his servants; but can you be kind and faithful to them, if you neglect the care of their souls, and providing for their spiritual welfare "the meat that endureth to eternal life?" And can this be done without leading them in the worship of God? And though it may be supposed they are capable of praying for themselves, yet not equally so in general with those that have authority over them, and have enjoyed superior advantages for the knowledge of God and religion. Besides, as we shall afterwards show, family worship will give weight to all your admonitions. In short, the light of nature plainly suggests that God hath given you authority over your families, and implanted in your hearts a love to them, for their good, as well as your own comfort and advantage. As they have souls as well as bodies, these, in all reason, ought to be part of your care; and as you can neither procure food nor grace for them, without the blessing of God, he ought to be daily and fervently worshipped. You

can never reconcile it to wisdom, good sense, faithfulness, or humanity, to act as if you were indifferent whether they were saved or perished. Again, the reasonableness of family worship will appear,

4. From the relation of families to the world. You will not deny that it is fit there should be religion and the worship of God in the world. Are families then, as such, no part of the world, or a part from whence no worship is due? It is surely reasonable, that every family should contribute to the public good, and be as useful as possible to mankind. They do contribute to this, as far as they are laborious and diligent in their lawful occupations; but how are they useful as rational, immortal creatures, but by manifesting wisdom, piety, justice, meekness, and charity; by being examples of peace, good order, and regularity? And can this be expected from them unless the worship of God be maintained? For it is, in its own nature, an admirable means to promote all such social virtues, and make a family, in which it is maintained, an excellent example to all the neighbourhood. But this point will come more naturally to be considered under the head of the advantages of family worship. I add once more, these reasons are illustrated and confirmed,

5. By the practice of the heathen. For "when the gentiles, which have not a written law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written upon their hearts." It is evident, from ancient history, that, besides their public worship in their temples and groves, they had family devotions. They had not only the tutelary deities or protecting gods of cities and kingdoms, but their household gods, called Lares or Penates. Some of the richer sort had them in little chapels, or particular apartments of their houses; and others upon the common hearth, to which the whole family offered prayers and sacrifices, or showed some religious regard. Of this nature, it seems, were the Teraphim, or idol gods of Laban and Micah, which we read of in scripture. After their solemn sacrifices they used to carry part home, and eat it as a religious feast in their families. There seems to be a reference to some domestic worship of the heathen, in a passage of the prophet Isaiah;* where, after several instances of public idolatry, which the Jews learned from them, had been mentioned, it is said, "Behind the doors also and the posts, hast thou set up thy remembrance," or memorial, thy idol-god, or some object of veneration. The prophet Ezekiel† likewise speaks of the worship used by "every man in the chambers of his imagery," his domestic chapel or bed-chamber, as some old versions read it. Now, though all this was idolatry, yet it proves it to be a dic-

* Isa. lvii. 8. † Ezek. viii. 12.

tate of reason, that there should be family worship. And this they substituted, not in the place of no religion, but in the place of true religion and worship, offered to the living and supreme God. The history of modern nations, particularly in both the Indies, shows that they have the same idea of family religion. The pagans have some object, image, or picture, in their houses, to which they pay some kind of devotion, besides their more public worship. These dumb idols and their worshippers will cry out against those who, with superior light and knowledge, neglect this reasonable service. These then are the arguments which reason suggests for the duty I am now recommending. Nor let these arguments be despised or thought lightly of; for the voice of nature is the voice of God; and what reason dictates is as much the law and command of our Creator as any thing contained in the bible. I shall not proceed further in the subject at present, but recommend these thoughts to your serious reflection, heartily praying that they may be the means of promoting religion in all your families, and so diffusing it into the next generation, and those that are to come. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

THE OBLIGATIONS TO FAMILY WORSHIP FROM SCRIPTURE.

2 SAMUEL VI. 20.

Then David returned to bless his household.

ONE of the disciples of Socrates, that great light of the pagan world, desired information from his master concerning some difficulties attending prayer; and, above all, particular requests made to God, which have proved injurious to the petitioners when granted. The philosopher owned himself utterly unable to satisfy his disciple upon this head, and concludes with these remarkable words: "We must continue in our ignorance till it shall please God to send a person into the world to give us full information concerning our duty." This person, whom Socrates hoped and desired that God would send into the world, he hath been pleased to send, even his Son Jesus Christ; who hath given us full information concerning our duty, and particularly directed us in the article of prayer. It becomes us to be thankful for such an instructor, and to hearken with the greatest attention to what he saith on this important article. His directions are so plain and clear, that one would think it unnecessary to enlarge upon them, if we did not see many of his professed followers utterly neglecting them. I gave you, in my

last discourse, the reasons why I intended to lay before you, at large, the nature of family prayer, and our obligation to it; and to show you particularly whence the obligation ariseth, on whom it lieth, and where the fault is to be charged, if it be not answered; and to leave those, that will persist in their neglect, more inexcusable than ever. In treating this subject I proposed to show you the reasonableness of family worship. This I argued from the relation of a family to the great God, as families are societies constituted by him, and furnished with special advantages and opportunities for worshipping him; from the relation of the several parts of a family to one another; and particularly their relation to the head of it; I argued it from the relation of families to the world; and the general practice of the heathen, in having some kind of family devotion, showeth, that this is agreeable to the dictates of reason, and is the law of God. I now proceed,

III. *To show you the scripture evidence for it;*

Or what proof ariseth from scripture that family worship is an important and necessary duty. And here I must call back your thoughts to what was said in the former discourse, concerning the reasonableness of it; and remind you, that the scripture was not designed to repeal the law of nature, but to confirm it. And though, as I have just now hinted in the case of Socrates, the light of nature did not give such directions about our duty as made a revelation unnecessary; nor did it discover a method of pardon and reconciliation for guilty creatures; nevertheless, as far as it goes, it is the law of God, and to be obeyed with all submission of soul. There were rational creatures upon earth, above two thousand years before any written law was given; and, except discoveries made to particular persons, as Adam, Noah, Abraham, and a few others, they had no other rule but the dictates of reason and obscure tradition. Now the apostle observeth, that "until the law of Moses, sin was in the world; but where there is no law, there is no transgression:" consequently, reason and conscience were their guide and law; and for disobeying this law they were guilty of sin. Scripture is a superadded light that confirms the law of nature; and if there could be no proof brought from scripture, that family prayer was a duty, it would still be a duty if it appeared to be reasonable in itself, and productive of the happiness of mankind. Those general laws of scripture, to follow after righteousness and that which is good; to seek our own and others' happiness, would all be, in effect, precepts for family worship. But I shall now lay before you what proof or evidence there is from scripture, that God requires it of us; and we shall consider some precepts that relate to it; the examples of good men who have practised it; and some passages inti-

mating that it is a duty, or referring to it as a general practice among the servants of God. Let us consider,

1. The precepts that require it. Now here I am very ready to allow, that I cannot find it any where expressly commanded. It is no where said in so many words, that every head of a family ought to pray with his family. The same remark may be made with regard to secret prayer; that there is no direct command to pray in secret. Our Lord indeed takes it for granted that his disciples would pray in secret, and gives them directions how to perform that duty. But I do not know any who question that to be a duty. With regard to family worship there are general precepts which ought, in all reason, to extend to that, and some particular precepts that seem immediately to refer to it.

There are general precepts, which ought, in all reason, to be considered by us as extending to that; and it will appear to be the will of our Master that they should extend to it. There are many such precepts as these, relating to prayer: "Pray always;" "Pray without ceasing;" Continue in prayer;" "Praying always with all prayer and supplication;" "I will that men pray every where;" "In every thing give thanks." Now will any say that family prayer is no prayer? That if a man is to pray every where, that is, wherever it is convenient, his family is excepted? If he is in every thing to give thanks, are family mercies to be omitted? These precepts require us to take all fit opportunities for prayer and praise; and reason and experience show, that families afford fit time, place, and occasion for these exercises. If any object against the duty, it lieth upon them to show, upon what principles family worship is to be excluded; and why a particular application of these general commands should not be made to that. Suppose God had given no particular commands about the time, the place, and the disposition for prayer; should we therefore conclude that we are not to pray at all, when he saith, "Pray always?" Besides, that precept, "Pray without ceasing," seems to have a reference to the daily sacrifice that was offered in the Jewish temple, every morning and evening, and was called the continual burnt-offering. This showed that God was to be worshipped daily, besides at solemn seasons, as on the sabbath and at their yearly feasts. If it be said, True it is every man's duty to pray alone and in his single capacity; I answer, we do not receive mercies merely as single persons, but as a society. We ought to pray, and give thanks, for family mercies, in and with the family, in our social capacity, as I showed in the former discourse. Let us consider how this reasoning will hold good in a parallel case. It is no where expressly commanded in scripture, that a man shall provide for his family, except in that general precept, "Thou shalt do no murder;" yet reason shows it would be the highest injustice and cruelty

to let them starve. But the apostle urgeth this as a duty required by Christ, when he saith, "He that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, or family, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* He hath denied the Christian faith, that requires this, though not expressly; and is worse than a heathen, who by the light of nature is taught to do it. The scripture doth not tell us who are our families; what food and clothing we shall give them; how often and at what hours they shall eat: yet it supposeth the care of them to be so evident a duty, that he who neglects it is worse than a heathen. And, by the way, if it be the duty of heads of families to take care of their bodies, much more of their souls. So that family prayer must be included in these general precepts, though not expressly mentioned.

We observe further, that there are some particular precepts which seem directly to refer to it. I cannot but consider the Lord's prayer in this view. He designed it for a social prayer. When he is speaking of secret prayer, he saith, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet;" here he speaks in the plural; "When ye pray say, Our Father; give us; lead us;" I argue it from that petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is a social prayer; it is to be used daily, as a form, or as a model: and with whom is it to be used? It is in men's family as well as personal capacity, that they want daily bread: nor can there, in general, be daily social prayer out of a family; the circumstances of the world will not admit of it. This seems therefore to be in effect a plain precept for family worship. I argue further, from the commands the apostle Paul gives us with regard to relative duties. Having exhorted the Ephesians to the discharge of them, and having mentioned the duties of husbands and wives, children and parents, masters and servants, he presently adds, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication."† Having exhorted the Colossians to the same duties, he immediately adds, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" as he had mentioned prayer and singing immediately before that exhortation.‡ This seems, by the connexion, to mean family prayer; and to be an intimation that the apostle considered that as a duty which would have a great influence in exciting them to the discharge of other relative duties. This may further be argued from the express command given to parents to "teach and instruct" their children, and "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:" therefore they should pray for a blessing. And as these precepts require a religious education, it will scarce be denied that teaching them to pray is included in the precept; nor can this well be done without praying in their hearing. The same may be said concerning the fourth commandment. Heads of families are required

* 1 Tim. v. 8. † Eph. vi. 18. ‡ Col. iv. 1, 2.

to keep the sabbath holy themselves; and to see that their sons and daughters, their men-servants and maid-servants, keep it so too. This is a plain intimation, that they are obliged to take care of the religion of their families: and if they have authority over them to bind them to sabbath sanctification, that authority should be used and improved for family worship, and every other religious service, by which they may be profited. Upon the whole, if family worship be a reasonable thing in itself; if it be (as we shall endeavour afterwards to show) highly advantageous; then all those precepts that require love to God and man, the religious care of our families, doing good in our several stations, and saving the souls of others, especially those committed to our charge; all these precepts, I say, do in effect require family worship. Let us consider,

2. The examples of those who practised it, as recorded in scripture. The scripture histories were designed to give us an account of the state of the church of God in succeeding ages; his dispensations to it, and appearances for it; and not the state of particular families. Yet we shall find there some very clear and eminent examples of family worship. Before the giving of the law, even very early, "men began to call upon the name of the Lord," that is, as I apprehend that phrase signifies, to worship him in society. As the earth was, in the first ages, divided into families, or small tribes only, the master of each family was the priest of it, and offered up prayers and sacrifices at the head of it. But let us consider some more express examples of it. Here we begin with the father of the faithful, even Abraham. We read of him that he "built an altar to the Lord" at Shechem; and when he removed to Bethel, "there he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord."* Now this was done with his family. He had no others with him in his removes; and a solitary sacrifice, and private prayer attending it, is what we never read of. God speaks with great honour of Abraham's care of the religious interest of his family; "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."† Is not to pray, the way of the Lord? Could he be thus careful of his family and support religion in it without prayer? Undoubtedly he taught them by his precepts and example. Of Isaac and Jacob we are likewise told that they built altars, though they had none but their own families with them. If any should say, "They had no priests in those days, and could have no public worship," the instance of Melchisedec proves the contrary; yet here was evidently family worship, and it is equally evident that God approved it. May I not in this connexion mention the example of Moses; who, when he led Israel in the wilderness, began and ended every day's journey with

* Gen. xii. 7, 8. † Gen. xviii. 19.

prayer for them, and with them, suited to their circumstances ?* Joshua is another example; who resolved that, though all Israel should forsake the worship of God, he and his house would serve the Lord; that is, worship him ; for it is opposed to idolatry or the worship of idols. How could he tell that his family were not idolaters, but by their joining with him in acts of homage to the living God ? And he speaks resolutely, as one that knew he had authority over them to require their attendance upon it. He would pray with them, and use his influence and authority over them, that they might serve none but God. The instance of David in our text is full to the purpose. He had brought the ark to the place which he had fixed for it ; and having spent the whole day in public devotions, and "blessed the people" in the name of the Lord of hosts, he then "returned to bless his household," that is, to pray with them and for them, for the words can admit of no other sense. This appears to have been his regular practice, from which that great solemnity could not divert him, when the time came for performing the exercises of religion in his own house. Queen Esther is another example of this. She and her maidens "fasted and prayed together."† She was the mistress of a family, had apartments and a household of her own; as we speak of the king's household, the queen's household, or the prince's household, though they live under the same roof. We have likewise the example of Job; concerning whom we are told, "that he offered up sacrifices according to the number of his children ;"‡ they were sanctified and attended the sacrifice, and it is added, "Thus did Job continually ;" in the original, "all the days," or "every day." This was his stated course of devotion, though on some occasions there were extraordinary sacrifices according to the number of his children. Let us particularly attend to the example of Daniel. Though he was a great man, and prime minister to the king of Persia, yet he prayed in his family. The king had made an edict, that no man should ask a petition of God or man for thirty days but of the king, under the penalty of being cast into the den of lions. Though Daniel knew this, "he went into his house and kneeled upon his knees three times a day," and "prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did aforetime."§ Now how could it be known to have been his manner aforetime, except it had been family prayer ? Or how could his enemies accuse him, and come in upon him to be witnesses thereof? They knew his course of worship, and therefore laid this snare for him ; and yet this good man would not neglect it, even for thirty days, though he knew the danger he was in, and the snare that was laid for him. We have likewise some instances of it in the New Testament ; particularly that of Cornelius, with which we introduced the last discourse ; "He

* Numb. x. 35, 36. † Esther iv. 16, ‡ Job i. 5. § Daniel vi. 10.

feared the Lord with all his house;" and when it is said, that "he was praying in his house," it may signify, "with his household," as the word often denotes. So Joshua resolved, "he and his house," that is, his family, "would serve the Lord." And when Peter came, notice is taken of his calling his kindred and friends together to hear the word; not his household; they would come of course, when any thing religious was going forward. Further, we read of several persons in the New Testament, who had "churches in their houses;" which some interpret of assemblies for public worship held there; but to me it appears more probable that it refers to family worship; because when Paul sends salutation to Aquila at Rome, and again to him, when he removed to Philippi or Ephesus, in both places he speaks of "the church in his house."* Now it is not likely that in both cities he should have a house so large that a public assembly could be held there; the number of Christians in both being great, and they at Philippi and Ephesus having bishops and deacons. Or, supposing that it was a public assembly, it will appear very incredible, that they should have no family worship in their houses, if they had sometimes public worship there. But the example which, of all others, is the most forcible, is that of our blessed Lord himself. Though he had no house, yet he had a family; for his disciples attended him. Thus he calls himself their master, and speaks of them as his household; and that is all which is essential to a family. We find that he not only instructed them, but prayed with them. St. Luke saith, "It came to pass as he was alone praying, and his disciples were with him,"† that is, in a private place, retired from the multitude who followed him. We read of his "praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, his disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray."‡ The seventeenth of John is his prayer with them; and they celebrated the passover and sung a hymn together, as a family. It cannot be expected that we should often read of his praying with them, partly through the shortness of the gospel history, and partly because their cases were so widely different. He had no sins to confess, no pardon to ask; but these instances are sufficient to show that he prayed with his household. These are the examples, which the scripture contains, of the practice of this duty: and you will observe that most of these persons are distinguished as the peculiar favourites of heaven. Abraham was the friend of God; David, the man after his own heart; Job, a perfect and upright man, who had none like him upon the earth; Daniel, a man greatly beloved; Cornelius, the person to whom, among the gentiles, the gospel was first preached; and Jesus was every thing that language can express, or thought conceive. We observe, once more,

3. There are some passages that refer to it as a duty, or as a

* Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19. † Luke ix. 18. ‡ Luke xi. 1.

known general practice among the servants of God; and these do in effect amount to precepts. It appears from the law of Moses, that it was customary, when a man had built a new house, to dedicate it by some religious solemnity; and the thirtieth psalm, as the title tells us, was composed for, and used at, the dedication of David's house. Now can we suppose that houses thus dedicated, should have no worship in them hereafter? that after they were solemnly devoted to God, he should never be honoured in them by social worship? To dedicate a church, and never have service there, but turn it into a market; how unaccountable! It is said, that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."* This plainly intimates, that he loveth "the dwellings of Jacob," though he prefers "the gates of Zion." And why? but because there are the public solemn acts of religion; and he loveth the dwellings of Jacob for a like reason, because there he is worshipped. This distinguishes them from other families, and therefore God loves them. David observes, that "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous."† This distinguishes the houses of the righteous from others. There is holy joy, expressed by singing the praises of God; whereas in others there is cursing, swearing, or carnal joy and mirth; the praises of God are not heard in them. Observe those words of Jeremiah, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name."‡ An imprecation by an inspired prophet is a prediction; it shall be poured out. The prophet must here mean families as distinguished from nations, or as constituent parts of them; or if he mean tribes or clans, as distinguished from nations, he speaks of all tribes without exception, great and small. And the reason holds equally with regard to a proper family. It is here taken for granted, that every family, which is not a heathen family, will call upon God's name. There seems to be an intimation of family worship in that passage of Zechariah, where, after he had foretold the repentance and conversion of the Jews in the latter day, that a spirit of humiliation, grace, and supplication should be poured out upon them on account of Christ, whom they had pierced, he saith, "The land shall mourn, every family apart;" and it is added, "their wives apart," with their maid-servants, and all, or some of their children, as was usual among them on days of solemn humiliation.§ To this I may add, that circumcision and the passover were family ordinances, undoubtedly attended with prayer and thanksgiving. And if a family was to join in religious exercises on these occasions, it seems highly reasonable they should do it oftener, on account of the blessings and mercies they received; and no doubt the pious did so. Let it be further observed, that when Christians are, in the New

* Psalm lxxxvii. 2. † Psalm cxviii. 15 ‡ Jer. x. 25. § Zech. xi. 12.

Testament, described as "a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices," it seem to intimate, they were to engage in social worship; were all called to be priests, and offer up such sacrifices, whenever they had families; for it is spoken of as the character of all Christians, and not of ministers alone. There appears likewise to me a strong intimation of this duty, when it is said, "A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for," saith the apostle, "if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"* or (as it is elsewhere expressed by the same word) "rule it well," as applied to the elders or bishops of the church; so that the ruling of a man's own house is such a ruling as relates to his public station; that is, teaching and guiding them, as their mouth in prayer, as well as instructing their minds, and overseeing their lives. It is a holy instruction and rule; it is leading them in the worship of God, as well as maintaining a proper subjection and good order among them. Now if a minister should thus rule his own house, why not others? If it is a benefit to his family, it will be a benefit to theirs; if he is to set them a good example, they are bound to follow it. The apostle recommends to wives, an obedient obliging disposition; and to husbands, a care to promote the religious interests of their wives, as being "heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered;"† an intimation that Christian husbands and wives, in those days, prayed together. And is there not equal reason why a master of a family should pray with his children and servants? The apostle knew this was a forcible argument; that they found so much comfort and advantage in their social prayer, that they would rather do any thing than have it dropped, or they be made unfit for it.

These, my brethren, are the scripture proofs that family worship is a duty incumbent upon all heads of families. There are many precepts that plainly include it; and some that seem evidently to require it; you have the examples of the most eminent persons recorded in the Old and New Testament, whose practice it was, whose example is recorded for our admonition, and to excite our imitation. There are several passages of scripture that refer to it, as the well known general practice of the servants of God. I say not that every one of the precepts, examples, and intimations which I have produced, must refer to family worship. Of some of them a different interpretation may be given; and there are few of them but some captious persons may cavil at, and strain to another sense. But take them all together, in their connexions, and as throwing light upon one another, and then say, whether you do not think, in your consciences, that they amount to a full, clear proof, that it is the will of God,

* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. † 1 Peter iii. 7.

there should be daily worship in every family; and that the head of a family, who neglects it, must be very criminal in his sight. I might have added and shown you at large, that family worship was maintained by the primitive Christians in the first and purest ages of Christianity; that it hath been the practice of those, in every succeeding age, who have been most eminent for wisdom and piety; insomuch that I believe a single instance cannot be produced to the contrary; but these particulars I wave, as I would not swell the number of these discourses unnecessarily, nor exceed the proper bounds of this. Let me conclude it with exhorting you to consider this and the former discourse in their natural and just connexion. Hear and attend to the voice of nature, reason, and conscience, as the law of God; and consider whether it doth not require family worship. Observe the superadded light of revelation. Attend to the voice of patriarchs and prophets, of Christ and his apostles, who join, as with one consent, to recommend and enforce this duty. Consider the examples of it, which have been produced, and the high encomiums pronounced upon many of them by the unerring judge of characters, and the lover of righteousness. See whether they ought not to be imitated by you; and whether you have not the highest reason to fear his displeasure, if you neglect this duty after such a variety of proofs of its importance and necessity. Though I cannot expect that the words of any man, however renowned for wisdom and goodness, should have much weight, if the word of God hath none; yet there is something so solid and useful, so affecting and so awful, in a remark of Archbishop Tillotson on this subject, that I beg leave to cite it, and to conclude with it: "The principal part of family religion," saith this great and good man, "is prayer, every morning and evening, and reading some portion of the scripture; and this is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected I do not see how any family can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all."

DISCOURSE III.

THE ADVANTAGES OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

PROVERBS III. 33.

The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

"WHO will show us any good?" is the language of all mankind; but few understand what real good is, and fewer seek it. Nevertheless reason and scripture tell us that the way of duty is the way of prosperity and happiness, and that in

keeping God's commandments there is great reward. One branch of duty, that tends to promote our happiness, both in the present and future world, is family worship. It is a piece of justice, which all families owe to the great God; which heads of families owe to themselves and those under their care: the neglect of it is very sinful, and give too much reason to suspect that he who neglects it is a wicked man. Our text therefore is very proper to introduce a discourse concerning the advantages of family worship: as it informs us, that "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked," be it ever so stately and wealthy; but that "he blesseth the habitation," or the meanest cottage, "of the just;" for so the word signifies, as it is in scripture rendered "sheep-cotes;" and we can scarcely conceive any habitation that is meaner. Having already illustrated the nature of family worship, and proved it to be a duty both from the light of nature and the word of God, from scripture precepts, examples, and intimations, I proceed to the fourth thing I proposed on this subject; namely,

IV. *To consider the great advantages of family worship.*

And here I shall show of what great service and benefit it is to heads of families; to those under their care; and what influence it will have upon reviving and promoting the interest of religion.

1. It will be of great advantage to heads of families. It will appear to be very advantageous to their worldly and their spiritual interest; and on both accounts worthy of their practice.

(1.) With regard to their worldly interest. And that in these two respects;—as it will engage the respect and subjection of those that are under their care, and draw down the blessing of God upon their affairs. It will engage the respect and subjection of those that are under their care. It is the best way to keep up your authority among them. A man never looks so great and so honourable as when at the head of a praying family; when he is their leader in devotion, reads the word of God to them, and blesses them in his name. How it is likely that your children and servants should fear and reverence you, except they have an opinion of your superior wisdom and piety? And how is it likely to be promoted in them, but by observing that you lead their devotions, and appear therein to reverence the great God yourself, and desirous that they should do it? This is the most likely way to engage them to fear God. Nothing but the fear of God will lay an obligation upon conscience. No other principle or motive will bind them to their duty when they are out of your sight; whenever a fair opportunity offers for neglecting your business, or doing you an injury. The respect and subjection of others is gained by kind and friendly usage. Now,

praying with and for your children and servants, as equally related to God, and having the same expectations from him, will incline you to treat them not merely with humanity as fellow-creatures, but with tenderness, care, and generosity as fellow-Christians. It will lead you to require of your servants as exact an observance of the duties they owe to God, as of those they owe to you. It will be almost impossible for a master, who prays with his family, to curse his servants, to use any reviling, threatening, or unkind language to them, to treat them as the dregs of the creation, or even to neglect their souls: and do you know so little of mankind as not be sensible that kind usage will engage their respect and affection, if any thing will; and lead them to perform their duty to you cheerfully, on which your comfort and success in business much depend? Whatever good lessons you give them, the circumstance of praying with them and for them will give these an additional weight; and they will reverence you and your instructions. Further, it will draw down the blessing of God upon your affairs, to guide, protect, and prosper you. You know little of religion, or even of the world, if you are not sensible that the blessing of God is necessary to make us prosperous, and at the same time comfortable. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. It is in vain to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, without his favour." Wisdom to contrive, health to labour, reputation, credit, and success, are all from God. Now, family worship is the way to obtain that blessing. It is so in its natural consequences; as it will promote the fear of God, and excite to diligence, integrity, and prudence. Men will be afraid to mock and affront God, by asking his blessing upon idleness, fraud, and rashness. The many promises he hath made of hearing prayer, strengthen our encouragement to expect his blessing. When families daily join to implore his favour, commit themselves to the Keeper of Israel, and go out to their daily labours in dependence on God and with desires of his blessing, they are likely to secure it. "The secret of God will be upon the tabernacle where his name is called upon; and he will," according to that prophecy of Isaiah, "create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, as well as upon her public assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night," as he led and protected Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire, to which there is here a reference.* This blessing will preserve your prosperity from being a snare to you; or will make your little go a great way, and sweeten all your earthly comforts. So the apostle observes, "Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer;"† which, by the way, is another scripture argument for family worship. If our

* Isa. iv. 5. † 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

daily bread is to be received with thanksgiving, and sanctified by prayer, then surely all our labours and enjoyments ought to be so too; and in this way we may expect a blessing, not only on our food, but our raiment, our houses, accommodations, and relations. Otherwise our table may be a snare, and our prosperity a curse. But daily prayer will make our comforts taste, as it were, of the heaven from whence they come, and retain a savour of the God who gave them. Thus hath godliness "the promise of the life that now is;" nor is that all, but likewise "of that which is to come;" which leads me to add, family worship will be of great advantage,

(2.) With regard to your spiritual interest. This, if you are Christians indeed, will have more weight with you than the former. It will impress a sense of God and divine things upon your hearts. And do not you who are heads of families need this, and on some accounts need it more than your families, because you have more weighty affairs upon your minds than they have, and because you are to be examples to them? You have not only the care and thought of providing for and ruling your families, but, being their superiors, are to set them good examples; are to watch over their tempers and manners, and be careful that you do not corrupt, but improve them. A composed attention to daily prayer will raise in you high thoughts of the divine perfections and excellencies; lead you to carry a sense of religion wherever you go, and, having begun the day with him, to "be in his fear all the day long." This will influence your general conduct. Conversing with the most holy and best of beings will refine your spirits; and having appeared under such a character in your family, a sense of decency will preserve you from any criminal behaviour. A concern not to be unfit for prayer at its stated seasons will be a guard upon your general conduct. The remembrance of your addresses to God with your family, will overcome many temptations to idleness, dishonesty, and excess. You will be ashamed to appear to want those virtues which your family heard you entreating for yourself and for them. You will recollect that not only God, but they are witnesses what sins you bewailed, what favours you desired, what duties you expressed your resolution to perform. You will be ashamed to drink to excess, or allow yourself in any indecency of behaviour, when your families have been witnesses to your prayers. You will be ashamed to profane the Lord's day, or suffer it to be profaned, by buying and selling, by visiting, or idle discourse, when you have introduced it with family worship; therein expressed your thankfulness to God for such an institution, and your desire that you and yours may keep it holy, and be made holy and heavenly by it. It will likewise increase your humanity and benevolence to your family and all about you; possess your minds with a true sense

of the power you have over your family to lead them to that which is good, and make you become exemplary in all the offices of a wise parent and a good master. And, once more under this head, it will promote the peace and composure of your minds. When you are going abroad to your business by day, when dangers and diseases are thick around you, it will afford you abundant satisfaction, that you have solemnly committed yourselves and your families unto God. Amidst the terrors by night, when storms and fires threaten to rend your houses to pieces, it will be comfortable to think that you have committed them to God. If your houses are turned into houses of mourning, it will be delightful to think that they have been houses of prayer; that affliction found you in the way of your duty; and that you cannot consider it as a judgment for having lived unmindful of God. If your houses are strait, inconvenient, and mean, you may, with greater propriety than the heathen philosopher, write over your door, God is here. Each of these particulars might be profitably enlarged upon; but I must proceed to consider the advantages of family worship,

2. With regard to those under your care. It will promote the comfort and peace of the family, and especially the happiness of your wives, your children, and servants. It will, in the first place, have a happy influence on the comfort and peace of your houses. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;" to have those who are of the same family peaceful, loving, obliging, and studying the ease and comfort of one another. There can be no happiness without domestic peace; nor is there any thing so likely to promote it as family worship. I fear there are few families in which there are not, sometimes, little differences and altercations between those that are in the nearest relation. Prayer will be likely to cement these differences, to sweeten their spirits one towards another, and prevent the sun going down upon their wrath. Public worship is the communion of saints and the bond of love; and so is family worship. Contentions would never rise high, or be of long continuance, where God was daily addressed by the family. They would be ashamed to be irreconcileable, averse to ask pardon of one another and to forgive, when they were going to supplicate divine mercy, and, in order to succeed, must "lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting."* With regard to the several branches of your families, the advantage of social worship to each of them is very great. As to your yokefellows, if you have a real love to them, you will be desirous of their spiritual welfare, and seek it by joint prayer; and will remember what the apostle urgeth, to "dwell with your wives according to knowledge," endeavouring to promote their religious interest, and "give honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel," being tender

* See how sensible the heathen were of this, Valerius Max. lib. ii. c. 1. §. 6.

of their infirmities, and solicitous for their maintenance and comfort; and "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."* You will "love your wives and not be bitter against them," when you are daily meeting at the throne of grace. Your frequently praying for your respective relations will tend to keep up that affection for them, which absence, distance, and new connexions are apt to lessen. Every one knows, and I wish it were more considered, how much the comfort of the married life depends on the regards which husbands and wives show to each other's relations. With respect to your children, the advantages of family worship are very great and important. From you, under God, they derive their being, and from you likewise they derive corrupt natures. They are entering upon a dangerous world, surrounded with numberless temptations and liable to perish; and should you not have pity upon them and be concerned for them? Do you not love them, and would you not have them serious, wise, diligent, and happy? And can this be expected while you neglect family worship? How is it likely they should learn religion, if you never read the scriptures and other good books to them, and pray with them? God hath solemnly committed them to your care, that they may be "a godly seed;" devoted to his service and trained up in his fear. They are formed for eternity, and must be prepared for it here. Now family prayer is an excellent, and perhaps the best, way of teaching children religion. Thus they will learn it gradually, as they do language. Observing solemn addresses daily made to a great and invisible Being, will impress their hearts, even before they are capable of understanding much of his nature. It may possess them with a belief of, and regard to, the providence of God; and settle some good desires and purposes in their hearts. It may teach them to value access to God as their greatest honour, and dispose them to lift up their voices and hearts to the glorious Being whom they observe you reverently addressing. Their regard to him will preserve them from sin; and abate those fearful apprehensions of invisible evil beings, which through the folly of nurses and servants they are apt to have, and which manly reason and piety cannot always conquer. Hearing you adore the great God tends to lead them to reverence and fear him as their Creator. Hearing you confessing sin before God and entreating mercy, may give them an early sense of the evil of sin and a dread of it. Observing how you express your thankfulness for divine mercies, is adapted to promote gratitude in their hearts; and, while it makes them sensible of, and grateful for, your kindness, may lead them to own a higher hand, and consider you only as the instruments of divine goodness. When they hear themselves in a solemn manner recommended to God, it will be likely to increase their affection

* 1 Peter iii. 6, 7.

for you, and to impress their hearts with the love of God; and as they grow in years and become more capable of thinking and judging for themselves, these dispositions will strengthen in them. It may engage them to pray for themselves, and to worship God daily in secret; not merely because you require it, but because they esteem it reasonable and find it to be comfortable. Add to this, that hearing your daily prayers will teach them what to ask for themselves, and furnish them with proper petitions. In short, families were formed to be nurseries of piety; and prayer is one way, the chief way, to promote it. And this shows the wisdom of God in the gradual progress of children's understandings, and keeping them so long dependent on their parents, and under their eye and care. Let me add, what I hinted at under the former head, that family worship will be of great advantage to your children, as it will influence not only your general conduct, and so make you a good example to them, but as it will influence your conduct to them; make you careful of their education, and desirous that they should have every advantage that can contribute to their piety and usefulness; preserve you from being greedy to raise fortunes for them, and bringing them up in pride, luxury, and fondness for the world. This will be the best way to guard them against infidelity and irreligion, from bad company and bad hours. Your prayers will add weight to your instructions, will do them good when you are dead, and be a better inheritance than any fortune you can leave them.* Your servants also will be likely to derive great advantages from family worship. You ought to look upon yourselves as fathers to all committed to your care. Servants are generally young; and so much is the education of children (among the poorer sort especially) neglected, that very few apprentices and servants enjoy much advantage by instructions, prayers, or example, till they go abroad. Now family worship will be a means of teaching them religion and to pray. And what was said above with regard to your children is almost equally applicable to your servants. The best, indeed the only security, for their faithfulness and diligence in your families, is the fear of God governing their hearts. This will lead them to act "not with eye service as men-pleasers, but with singleness of heart as unto the Lord." Can justice, temperance, truth, meekness, diligence, and good-nature, prevail in a family where there is no fear of God? And can that be expected where there is no prayer? Observe those words,

* Dean Prideaux observes, "The excessive ignorance I have met with in some, who offered themselves for holy orders, is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the neglect of family devotion. For while religion remained in families, and God was daily worshipped, children were early bred up by their parents, and instructed in the knowledge of him. And the principles of Christianity, thus instilled into them, continued to grow up with them into further knowledge, as themselves grew to be further capable of it. Thus young men carried some knowledge of religion with them to the universities." Pridcaux's Life, pp. 90, 91.

"Thou castest off fear and restrainest prayer before God." If prayer be restrained fear will be cast off. But your prayers will improve their spirits and draw down a blessing upon them. They will be ashamed to embezzle the property or neglect the business of a master who daily prays with them and for them, and thus appears deeply concerned for their everlasting welfare. By this means you may recover them from temptations and sinful habits into which they have fallen. And there have been instances of servants who have been awakened and converted merely by family prayer. This will be an advantage to your children; as in many families children are corrupted by wicked servants, who, it is well known, have often a great influence over them. Besides, family prayer will be an advantage to them, as it will lead you to do nothing to corrupt their minds; to impose no business upon them which will hinder their public and private devotions, but be glad they should have all opportunities and encouragements to know and do their duty to God, who is your master as well as theirs, and "with whom there is no respect of persons." Whether these labours of yours, with regard to your servants, succeed or not, you will have the satisfaction of having done your duty, and their blood will not be required at your hands. If God is pleased to make you instruments of promoting the spiritual welfare of your servants, you will be richly repaid for your pains with them; but if you can thus save your children's souls you will have a joy that nothing can equal. I observe, once more, family worship is of great advantage,

3. With regard to reviving and promoting the interest of religion; on account of the influence it may have, to promote a general reformation, and to propagate religion among those that are yet unborn. If you have not this at heart, you are not Christians; if you have, this thought will have great weight with you. Families are the first societies in the order of nature, and the seminaries of all other societies. Towns, cities, nations, and churches, are all composed of families. Now, let me entreat you to consider, what influence one praying, godly family, may have upon a whole town, and kingdom, even to the end of the world. That a general reformation is wanted among us, is a truth too plain to be denied, and too melancholy not to be lamented. And how is this to be brought about, but by family religion? Other remedies may check the growth of the disease, but this alone can cure it. Family worship will tend to keep religion in countenance. Those families will be reverenced by their profane, ungodly neighbours, in which it is known that God is honoured. It may lead others to approve their piety, and, from approving, to imitate it; and help their grovelling, low-thoughted souls to consider their concern with God and practise their duty to him. Your children and servants, having been

* Job xv. 4.

used to family worship and having had their spirits seasoned with religion in your houses, may translate it into their own. It is well known, that the custom of families, even in smaller matters, is apt to continue. Men are fond of and plead for the way of their ancestors. Even the idolaters, mentioned by Jeremiah, would burn incense and offer drink-offering to the moon, the queen of heaven, because their fathers had done it;* and it may be hoped that the children of praying families will adopt so pious a custom in their own, and not suffer the ancient glory of the family to be lost. Thus one religious family may be the seed of many more, and they may be multiplied in every succeeding age till the end of time. Thus, "the generations to come may learn the worship of God, even the children who shall be born, who may arise and commit it," as a sacred trust and depositum, "to their children, and teach them to set their hope in God." Youth sprung from fathers, or entrusted with masters, in whose families there is no prayer, are not likely to be good. The neglect of this duty, and of the religious observation of the sabbath in families, is the chief cause of the corruption and degeneracy of the age; and especially those many, and I fear too just, complaints that are made, of the ignorance, insolence, and ill behaviour of servants. Here, therefore, the evil must begin to be remedied: and as we see how difficult it is to engage persons to introduce religion into their families, after it hath long been neglected, it must be very desirable that children and servants be accustomed to it in the families to which they belong; that they may naturally set up their altars to God, as soon as they have houses of their own. In short, family worship is like the prophet's casting salt into the fountain; it may make all the streams that flow from it salutary and useful, how wide soever they extend: and thus by degrees may the voice of united prayer prevail above the cry of our sins, and be the glory and defence of our land. But while this duty is neglected, and rising families, having not seen it practised, never think of introducing it into their own, what can be expected but that the corruption will increase in every new generation, till the measure of our iniquities is full, and wrath cometh upon us to the uttermost? If, therefore, you love your posterity, if you love your country, let your love show itself by the daily worship of God in your families. I observe further, family worship may tend to revive religion, as it may influence those that are occasionally in our families; not only our domestics, but our relations, visitors, neighbours, and any other that may occasionally join in our family devotions, or know that we are regular and constant in them. This will not only keep up the general reputation of religion, but may awake them to a sense of their duty, if they have neglected it. It will likewise tend to revive religion, as the several branches of our

* Jer. xliv. 17.

families will be enabled, by our domestic worship, to get more improvement by the public exercises of religion. They will be habituated to a reverent behaviour in the house of God, and a serious attention to what they hear there; and therefore be more likely to be benefited by it. I believe it may be observed, in the general, that those children behave best at church, who come from houses where there is family prayer. Let me add, a holy well-governed family, is a preparative for a holy well-governed church. If heads of families did their part, and sent prepared materials to the church, the work of pastors would be unspeakably more easy and delightful. But if churches are made up of ignorant, ungodly persons, who savour nothing but the things of the flesh, who are not taught to pray themselves and hear no prayers at home, the minister's work will be extremely difficult. He must always be teaching his auditory the first principles of religion, which should have been done at home; and have the painful, though necessary labour, to suit divine things to their uninformed understandings. Having been confirmed by the bad examples of their parents and masters in the neglect of prayer, they are often a dishonour to the church, and a scandal to Christianity. But if this neglect should grow more general, and bring down national judgments upon us, it may properly be considered as another advantage of family worship, that it may keep up the seed of pure religion, till God return to us in mercy. If popery should be established among us, we may have no other but family worship; and it is this which hath supported the reformed religion in France, that otherwise would have been quite lost. The poor persecuted protestants are extremely diligent in that duty; and this preserves a remnant, a seed among them, which I doubt not will appear abundantly, when the time to favour Zion, even the set time is come. Nothing will be so likely to prevent our land from becoming like theirs, as family worship. By this means religion may spread through the kingdom. "A little one may become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation." These then are the many and great advantages of family worship; and thus doth God "bless the habitation of the just." And now, sirs, if you have any regard for your own interest for time and eternity, for the welfare of your families, and the support of religion, let God be daily honoured in your houses, and be assured you will not seek him in vain: for thus hath our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* If he will be with any two or three, most of all with those of the same family, who daily join in social devotion. Hear these gracious words, ye neglecters of this duty, to excite you to it: hear them, ye that practise it, for your comfort and encouragement, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

* Matt. xviii. 20.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE EXCUSES FOR THE NEGLECT OF FAMILY WORSHIP CONSIDERED.

JOB XXI. 15.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?

JOB had been, in the preceding verses, describing the great prosperity of many wicked men: one ill consequence of which was, that it made them more bold and daring in their impieties. Therefore they say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" These words are proper to introduce that part of the subject of family worship which I am now to consider; namely, the excuses that are made for the neglect of it. It is no wonder that profane and profligate sinners make objections to so important and useful a duty: men who forget God, and themselves, and another life; who have no concern about their own souls and their spiritual necessities, much less any about the souls of their domestics. But it is very strange that any thing like this should be the language of professing Christians, who own a God, a providence, and a future state, and call themselves disciples of Christ. Were they thoroughly disposed to do their duty, to consider the obligations to family worship, and the many advantages of it, they would be so far from making objections against it, that they would rather desire their obligations may be increased and strengthened. But since there is such an unhappy disposition in mankind to cavil and object, I now proceed, according to the method I proposed,

V. *To consider the objections which have been raised against the practice of this duty, or the excuses which have been made for the neglect of it; for they are rather excuses than reasonable objections.*

Those which appear to be mere cavils I shall but just mention; and insist more largely upon those which may have some weight in them, or concerning which honest minds may want further light. But let it be remembered, that the matter is to be examined as in the presence of God, the final judge; and if you cannot bear to consider and debate it as in his presence, it is a sign of a bad cause indeed, and that you are secretly convinced it is so. The principal reasons that I have heard or met with, against the stated regular practice of this duty, are, that there is no difference between those families that do and do not practise it; that it is generally neglected; that other methods are taken to promote the religion of their families; that they

want time or ability for it; that their families will not submit to it; or that it hath been so long neglected that they know not how to introduce it. Let us now examine what weight each of these excuses hath. It hath been alleged,

1. That there is no difference between those families that do, and those who do not worship God. I mention this first, because our text refers to it; and the language of it suits those who start such an objection. You see it is not a modern objection. The profane sinners in Job's time thought prayer unnecessary, because they prospered without it. And some, in the prophet Malachi's time, said, "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his word, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?"* If the objectors refer to worldly prosperity it may have some weight. But then it is an objection that a Christian cannot consistently make, unless he can prove that such prosperity is the necessary consequence of religion, or absolutely promised to those who practise it. The question is, what is true prosperity? and if that consists in the favour of God, an interest in Christ, peace and comfort of mind, and good hope of future blessedness, through the witness of the Spirit, then we may confidently assert, that this is only to be found in the way of duty and keeping God's commandments. It is true, indeed, that many families prosper in the world who never call upon God; but then they "have their good things" in this life only, and the "prosperity of fools destroys them." It must be allowed, that many good men defeat their own prayers by an imprudent conduct. But if you will look abroad in the world, you will find it is not religion that reduceth men to beggary or straits. If the objectors mean spiritual prosperity, and that family worship doth not make men so wise and good as I have represented, we only consider its natural probable consequences. There may be bad men in good families, as there was a Judas in Christ's. But no one will say that his instructions and prayers were not adapted to make his household good. Many of those, whose miscarriages and infirmities give occasion to such an objection, would very likely have been worse had it not been for family worship. The same objection would lie against public or secret prayer; every one is not made good by it. The best answer to this objection would be fact. Let us look abroad in the world, and see whether there be not an evident difference, in general, between those families that worship God and those that do not. Which of them abounds most with impiety and injustice; with oaths, curses, drunkenness, quarrelling, and a worldly spirit? Which of them appear most clean, decent, orderly; are most respected and countenanced by their superiors? Were a fair trial made, I durst put the whole upon this issue. But if

* Mal. iii. 14.

religion be a friend to worldly prosperity, and the only way to the prosperity of the soul, then family prayer, as a part, and an excellent means of religion, must be serviceable to prosperity, though there may be some instances in which its good effects do not appear. It may be pleaded,

2. That it is generally neglected, and that too by some good men, and therefore is not so important as hath been represented. This is a mere cavil; for is not the fear of God, the Lord's supper, and, in many places, public worship, generally neglected? And if this duty be so too, which, by the way, is not so easy to be known, it is so much the worse, and the reproach of the age. But the question is, whether it be a duty or no? If it be, it is little to us who practiseth it or who neglects it. Our rule is, not to "follow a multitude to do evil;" not to be "conformed to this world." And we are assured this will be no excuse at the great day. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished;" and "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that walk in it." Besides, this is rather an argument for it. It should awaken our zeal to practise our duty because few do it; and our obedience will be peculiarly acceptable. And whereas it may be said, that some wise and good men neglect it, I would not positively say that every one who doth neglect it is a wicked man, and in the way to destruction; but where there is so much evidence that this is a duty, I must be allowed strongly to suspect his integrity and piety. But, on such a point, I would rather use Mr. Baxter's words than my own. Having thus stated the objection, "Many good people are against it," he answers, "I know no such persons. I confess, I once thought some to be good Christians that were against family prayer, but now they appear otherwise; not only by this, but by other things. I know none that have cast off this duty but have taken up vile sins in its stead, and have cast off other duties besides this. Let others observe and judge as they find." It may be pleaded by some,

3. That other methods are taken to promote religion in their families. But here the question returns again, whether this be a duty or no? If it be, this is a vain plea, and highly affronting to God: for "he that keeps the whole law, and offends in one point, is guilty of all." You plead, perhaps, that you read to your families, admonish them, and teach them to pray. I would not be so rude as to question the truth of this. I would rather commend your care herein. You bring them to public ordinances; they have been and are catechized and instructed by your ministers. We are obliged to you for giving them an opportunity to profit by our labours. But this is doing little yourselves. You are priests in your own houses; and your particular relation to them, and authority over them, require,

that you not only teach them but pray with them. You would not accept such a plea from a servant, that he had been promoting your interest, though he had neglected what you particularly gave him in charge to do, and picked and chose out of your orders, without observing them all. But there are few will make this objection, and fewer can satisfy their consciences with it. It is more commonly pleaded,

4. That you want time for the performance of family worship. Here I must appeal to your own consciences as in the sight of God. Let your worldly business be ever so large and urgent, say, whether you do not waste more time every day than is necessary for a serious, solemn address to God twice in it; and whether your business excludes every thing else of less importance. You have your set times for your meals and for sleep; and you find very little difficulty in contriving your business so, in the general, as to keep to those times. Is there not as much time spent every day in looking about you, talking with your neighbours, receiving and paying visits, reading the news, and the like, as would be sufficient for family worship? Is it not possible to redeem at least a quarter of an hour in a morning and another in the evening from unnecessary sleep, to employ in this work? Besides, what is this business that you say takes up so much time? Is there any business more important than serving God, and saving your souls and the souls of your families? You have a great deal to do in the world, but have you not more to do with God than all the world besides? Are not your families related to God as his creatures and servants? Are they not constitutions and societies formed for another world as well as this? Is not religion the one thing needful, and doth not all your prosperity and happiness depend upon the divine favour? Whose is your time, and whose business have you to do in the world, God's or your own? Is it no part of your business in life to pay God his debts, and discharge your dues to him? Is any worldly care and business so important, that you cannot spare a few minutes daily to maintain a most pleasant intercourse and most gainful commerce with heaven? Is not this indispensable business which you plead, an inordinate, sordid love of money? And is not this the true reason why family worship is neglected, not because men are very busy, but because they are extremely idle; too idle to take any pains to unscrew their affections from sensible things, to reduce their wandering thoughts, and bring their hearts to a compliance with their duty?* Is it not better, in the judgment of sober reason, that the pursuit of temporal interest should be a little checked, and, for a while, suspended, than that affairs of everlasting consequence should be laid aside; that you should impair your substance rather than endanger your souls?

* Barrow.

and displease men rather than offend almighty God? Remember our Lord's parable of the king's feast, where the guests excused themselves, one pleading that he had purchased land, another that he had bought oxen, and another that he had married a wife, but the excuses did not satisfy. It is the character of a good man, that he "guideth his affairs with discretion." And with a little care and forethought, religion and business may well consist together, so that they shall neither hinder nor thrust out one another. Doth not the immortal spirit justly challenge a large share of our time? Must eternity, which comprehends all time, have no time belonging to it or allotted for its vast concerns? It shows a most criminal neglect of the soul, and a prodigious love of the world, to think that praying time is lost, or that it may be spent better. Besides, the more business you and your families have to do in the world, the more need you have of prayer, as it is a means to engage the assistance and blessing of God, and as it tends to preserve your hearts from being overcharged with the cares of this life, and entangled with the love of money, which is the root of all evil, and sinks so many into destruction. Let me further entreat you to recollect the examples of family worship recorded in scripture, which I have laid before you. There was Joshua, the ruler, and David, the king of Israel; Daniel, prime minister; Abraham and Job, who had such very large families, such a multitude of cattle and servants; yet they could all find time for family worship. And do you not know instances of persons in the present age, who have much business and many cares, and yet can find time for it? And their circumstances prove that religion doth not impoverish and beggar their families. In short, if you can truly say, as in the sight of God, that you cannot spare time from greater things; that you have more important and necessary employment than conversing with God, or that the work itself doth not demand so much care and self-denial, you may neglect it. If not, see how you will answer it to God. He will soon remove you to an awful eternity, and then you will be of another mind. It is objected by many,

5. That they want ability for it. It is almost the only instance in which men seem to have a low opinion of their own abilities. For a Christian to say he cannot pray, is most astonishing. "A Christian that cannot pray," saith Bishop Wilkins, "is like an orator that cannot speak, or a traveller that cannot go." If the heart be rightly disposed, it doth not require much ability. This want of ability, as far as it is real, too often proceeds from an ignorant heart, or a mind unaffected with, and unconcerned about, divine things; that knows little of its own sins, and wants, and mercies. Were men to study the science of religion and prayer, as they ought, and as they do other sciences; would they make the scriptures, especially the Psalms and other devotional parts,

familiar to their minds, they would not find such difficulty in it. Yea, had they never studied it as a science, were their hearts deeply impressed with divine things, they would no more want words, than a beggar doth, when hunger and cold pinch him.* Perhaps you do not sufficiently consider the nature and design of prayer, and forget that the most plain and familiar expressions, provided they are grave and serious, are best suited thereto, most intelligible to those that join in it, and most impressive. Consider, you are to lead the devotions of your children and servants. And it may reasonably be supposed that your understanding is superior to theirs, and that they, of all others, are not likely to criticize upon your prayers; and, if they have any piety or decency, will not dare to do it. In this, and all other cases, it is accepted "according to what a man hath." Though you may not perhaps equal others in the gift of prayer, that is no reason for the neglect; any more than it would be a reason why you should neglect to keep your books, or write letters, because you cannot write so fine a hand as others do. I am sometimes ready to suspect that this kind of humility is no other than rank pride, because they cannot do so well as others. But if an insuperable modesty and timorousness of spirit will not allow you to conduct family worship with freedom and composure, then take some family prayer book, and use that. For the substance of a duty is in every case to take place of circumstances. It is well known that protestant dissenters do not, in such cases, object against the use of forms in family worship. Several of that persuasion, as well as our brethren of the establishment, have published very suitable and excellent ones. We object indeed to human authority in matters of religion, and being so tied down to the use of particular forms, and some of them very exceptionable ones, as to have no liberty to add, alter, or vary from them, whatever circumstances may require. As the case of families is variable there is less reason for being bound to the use of them there than in public. And indeed, as the pious Mr. Jenks observes, "I should as soon expect to meet with a shoe that would fit every foot, as a form of prayer that would suit every family." It is the duty of those that cannot go without these crutches to use them. And they may sometimes vary, use a form or pray without, according to the frame of their minds, or the persons present at their worship. Or they may intersperse in their forms a sentence here and there, suited to particular occasions and the circumstances of their families. You have the promise of the Spirit to help your infirmities, and teach you what to pray for, if you earnestly seek it. The chief thing is, to have the heart impressed with a sense of God, and to serve him in spirit and in truth. In short, the plea of want of ability will avail no head of a family, but him that cannot read;

* Imperitis quoque, si modo sunt aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt. Quintilian.

nor him, except he is too old to learn, or hath no one in his family that can read, and whom he may employ on this occasion. It is a matter of conscience and duty, sirs; and every man must do as well as he can. Perhaps some may plead,

6. That their domestics will not submit to it. You should be sure of this, by making the experiment. To conclude so without trial, is using them unkindly and unjustly. Perhaps they are even now secretly wishing you would introduce family worship, and praying God to put it into your hearts to do so. I know assuredly that this has been the case in some families; that some children and servants have greatly lamented the want of it. Methinks you should blush and be ashamed to hear of this, lest it should be your own case. This shows that, in other instances, the objection I am now considering may be idle, trifling, and a mere pretence. If you suspect that your domestics will not submit to it, your business is to talk the matter over, and reason the case very seriously with them. If it is your duty to pray in your family, it is their duty to concur; and if they will not, they are not only rebels against you, but against God. Besides, you have authority as heads of families to support religion in them. If it be the wife that opposeth, (not to say how much reason you have for humiliation, that you made so bad a choice,) your duty is to go on with divine worship; and if she be a hindrance to the regularity of it, the guilt will lie at her door. If your children oppose it, you have either been greatly deficient in your care of their souls, or have wretchedly lost your authority over them. But that authority you are still to recover; and requiring their attendance may cure this impiety and obstinacy, which may have been in a great measure owing to the neglect of this duty in time past. And it will be highly reasonable and fitting that, in the distribution of your favours and substance, you should make a distinction between those that reverence God and their parents, and those that do not. As to your servants, there your way is clear. If they make a pretence that they cannot in conscience attend, you ought in conscience to get rid of them. If enmity to God and religion cannot be got out of their hearts, they must be got out of the family; and Psalm ci. will both direct and vindicate you in so doing. It is better they should submit upon interested views than not submit at all. Their secret dislike to religion may be conquered by prayer; at least it will not render your prayers vain and ineffectual upon the whole; since Christ prayed even with Judas. God hath given you authority over your families for their good, and in this instance you ought strenuously to use it. Once more, I fear it is a very common excuse,

7. That it hath been so long neglected that you know not how to introduce it. You would not think this a sufficient plea in the mouth of a thief, a drunkard, or a whoremonger; that he

had been so long accustomed to his vices that he could not leave them. You imagine that to introduce family worship will be owning your guilt; in effect telling your family that you have been in the wrong hitherto, and making yourself mean and little in their eyes. I believe this objection hath great weight with many; it hath been urged against making very desirable and useful alterations in the church. But consider, sirs, is it any reproach to a man to acknowledge his errors and to amend them? It is a common saying, "The wise change their minds often; fools never." Will any but fools and brutish persons think worse of a man for so doing? And is their judgment to be regarded, where God, and conscience, and eternity are concerned? If you are backward to the work on this account, your ministers will be ready to assist you in making a beginning, and would do it in the tenderest manner they could; and so as, if possible, not to lessen, but increase your esteem and respect in your families. But if you still say you are ashamed, I answer it is a mean and cowardly shame. A young man at Rome, coming out of a house of ill repute, saw the virtuous Cato coming along the street, and immediately drew back. Cato went up to him and said, "Come out, come out; it is no shame to come out; it was a shame to go in." It is a shame to have neglected your duty so long; not to enter upon it. It will be your glory to own your former neglect; and you will appear honourable in the sight of God, and angels, and all wise and good men. While you neglect it, you are living in sin; for omissions are sins; and the servant that knoweth his Lord's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. If you still plead this shame, pray consider how shame will be estimated at the great day. Then some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. "To be hurried away from the bright and glorious presence of the blessed God, under the notion of one that would not call upon him; to be separated from angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and be an associate with devils and wicked men! When it is asked, Why is he driven into darkness and cast into those regions, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? the answer must be, He would not call upon God. He had a family, but there was no religion in it; he never cared to keep up God's interest in his earthly station."* Think, whether this will not be a greater shame than to begin a holy religious course, that hath been neglected hitherto.

Thus have I considered and endeavoured to obviate the several excuses which are made for the neglect of family worship. I have dwelt longer upon the subject, than a serious, holy Christian may think necessary; who hath no objection against this duty, nor needs so many arguments to persuade him to it. But I insist upon these things, in order to convince gainsayers; and, as

* Howe.

far as I can, leave those inexcusable, that will persist in this neglect. And, upon the whole, I entreat that these particulars may be carefully weighed. You know best what are your pleas against this duty; whether all, or any, that I have mentioned. Judge yourselves, therefore, as in the presence of the heart-searching God. But remember, he cannot be mocked; and therefore, "be not deceived." If your own consciences tell you, I have sufficiently answered your pleas; then remember that God will be a witness against you; this discourse will be a witness against you; your children and servants, yea, and your own consciences will be witnesses against you, if you defer it any longer. And "lo," as it follows after the text, "their good is not in their hand;" these cavillers against serving God and praying to him have no true and lasting prosperity; and every good man will add with Job, "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." I will never join with them in their impiety and neglect: and God grant it may be far from us all! Amen.

DISCOURSE V.

A SERIOUS ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO NEGLECT FAMILY WORSHIP.

JEREMIAH X. 25.

Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.

"WHO knoweth the power of thine anger?" said Moses, "even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." What then must "fury" be, even his heaviest indignation? Who would not tremble at the thought of a drop of it falling upon him? How much more then a torrent of it "poured forth?" Yet this is, in effect, threatened in the text, as being imprecated by an inspired prophet. And upon whom will this fury be poured out? Undoubtedly "upon the heathen, who know not God;" for they had "devoured Jacob, and made his habitation desolate." But how are these heathen described? As families that call not upon God's name. A terrible insinuation! But there are families who style themselves Christians, that call not upon God's name: and is it not a natural inference that they are like heathen, and have great reason to fear the divine displeasure? I choose to prefix these words to my present discourse, because they are very awful and awakening; and because the business of it will be to make a serious address to the consciences of those who live in the neglect of family worship. I have shown, in some former discourses, the reasonableness and advantages of it, and endeavoured to answer the excuses that are made for the neglect of it. As this is a duty of so much importance to the life, the credit, and the support of religion; as it is so hard

to persuade men to begin a work they have not been used to, and which does not suit the relish of a carnal, earthly mind, it requires line upon line, precept upon precept: and I would leave nothing unsaid that is likely to impress your minds. I proceed, therefore, now to the sixth thing I proposed on this subject, viz.

VI. *To make a serious address to those who have hitherto neglected family worship:*

By way of expostulation and of advice; and more especially to those who may be disposed to enter upon the faithful and regular discharge of it.

1. By way of expostulation. And I shall principally urge some topics that were not mentioned, or could not conveniently be enlarged upon, in the preceding discourses. And here I must expostulate with some of you,

(1.) Consider the advantages you have enjoyed for the practice of this duty. You are many of you the children of God's servants; who were careful to teach you the good knowledge of the Lord, to train you up in his nurture and admonition, that you might be a godly seed. You had early advantages and opportunities for being acquainted with God and religion. You were born and brought up in families where this duty was regularly practised. You were not only taught to pray, but, by hearing the daily prayers of your parents or masters, had advantages for learning the language of Zion. Religion hath been the honour of your families for many generations; and been no disadvantage to them, either in point of character or circumstances. And it is much more your glory to be descended from such ancestors, than to be the sons and daughters of nobles and princes. Now, have you no gratitude to God for such a privilege as this? Will you lose the ancient glory of your family? Shall it ever be said, that the entail of religion was cut off by you, and that your family is the first in the line in which the worship of God is cast out; that yours is the first heathen family in the succession? Consider,

(2.) How you came to have families, and to have comfort in them. Are you not sensible that God setteth the solitary in families, and buildeth up your houses? And why hath he constituted families, but that they may be the support of religion and nurseries of piety? God "fixeth the bounds of men's habitation." And why? "That they should seek the Lord."* It is owing to his good providence that you have the means of supporting a family; that you are not written childless in the earth; that he hath spared the lives of some of your children, when they were threatened, and called them back from the borders of the grave; that you can maintain a servant or servants to wait on you and make your lives comfortable. He

* Acts xvii. 26.

preserveth your tabernacles in peace, "that no evil befalls you, nor any plague comes nigh your dwelling." It is owing to his good providence that your affairs are thriving and prosperous; that you have all things richly to enjoy. And doth the founder and preserver of your families claim and deserve no homage from them? Hath the God of all the families of the earth no right to your prayers and your praises? Consider further,

(3.) What sort of creatures your families are composed of. Are they not rational, immortal beings, capable of knowing and serving God, and designed for an everlasting existence? And can you be content that they and you should live together like brutes, and never acknowledge the good hand of God upon you and entreat his favour? Have you no love for your children, as rational creatures? Or is it a mere natural, animal love, such as brutes have for their offspring, who take care to feed and defend them? And wherein are you better to your children than brutes are to their young, if you do not commend them to God, teach them to pray, to fear the Lord from their youth, and prevent their being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin? Is it your only business to provide portions for your children, and take no care of their immortal interests? Have your servants likewise no souls, that you should not distinguish them from the beasts? Are you not to teach your children and household the way of the Lord? and is not prayer (as I observed above) that way? And can you teach them without leading them and going before them in it? Have you not authority over your children and servants, to promote their regard to religion? And is not this the only instance in which you would care to have it denied or called in question? May not the misbehaviour of some of your children or servants be owing to this neglect? And have not your hearts smitten you when you heard of their evil doings, from a consciousness that you have neglected family worship, or not been so regular in it as you should have been? Or if they are sober and good, no thanks to your care, but solely to the riches of divine grace. Consider again,

(4.) Is not the neglect of family prayer very ungrateful to the divine goodness which permits it? We are not to look upon it merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a privilege, a singular favour granted us by the God of heaven. And is it not great condescension in God, that he will be mentioned and called upon in the families of such sinful creatures as we are? Is it not a great reproach to us that we have not considered it in this light? God in effect says, Every house of yours shall be a house of mine, if you do not shut me out. I, the high and lofty One that inhabit eternity, will dwell with you, and have your houses for my sanctuary, if you are willing it should be so.* What an honour and privilege is this! Among

* Howe.

the ancient heathen, there was no penalty reckoned more grievous, than to be forbidden to attend their sacrifices. And we find, in the history of this nation, that in the days of popery it was reckoned a most terrible thing to have the whole nation excommunicated by the pope, and put under an interdict; that there should be no public religion in it. Suppose, sirs, the case had been thus; that instead of allowing and commanding you to pray in your families, God had forbidden you: that he had put any of your houses under an interdict; and by some special significations of his mind, had said, I will allow all the neighbouring houses to call upon me; but I will have no worship out of your house. Let all the rest of the street worship me, and I will hear and accept them; but from your house I will accept no sacrifice, I will hear no prayer. What a terrible doom were this! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that dwelling! And will you make this the case with you, by shutting out prayer? Consider likewise,

5. Do you not need the blessing of God upon your affairs? And is it not promised to prayer, and obtained by it? Is it not his blessing that maketh rich? or will the hand of the diligent do without it? Doth not he give power to get wealth? Do not your success and reputation in the world depend upon him, and the turn which he giveth to the minds of men? And do you not forfeit that blessing when you are not thankful for it, or do not entreat the continuance of it? What comfort can you have in your enjoyments, when you cannot consider them as fetched in and sanctified by prayer? May not the consequence of your unsanctified prosperity be, that your table will prove a snare, and your wealth the instrument of sin, and the fuel of lust? And though you may be rich and prosperous at present, cannot God at once blast your credit, destroy your substance, and make you empty; so that when you look for much, you shall bring in little? Those are awful words, which prosperous men who forget God should often think of; "I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of Hosts."* May he not withdraw those blessings which you never thank him for, or only in form; and send upon your families those judgments which you never deprecate? What signifieth it how much you leave your children, unless there be a blessing with it, and by good instructions and prayers you have taught them to make a proper use of it?

Consider, likewise, whether this blessing is not promised, and hath not been obtained, in the way of prayer. Doth not God say that for this he will be sought unto? Is not prayer one condition of finding favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man? Hath it not (as I have largely shown) a

* Mal. ii. 2.

natural tendency to promote your prosperity, and your comfort in it? and can you hope for it without prayer? God required the Israelites to give the priest their dues, for this reason, "that he might cause the blessing to rest in thine house."* And can that be expected, if God hath not his due, his sacrifice of prayer and praise? Doth not, as St. James expresseth it, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avail much?" He doth not say how much, because he would have you pronounce upon trial and experience; but it hath done wonders in every age. It would be easy to produce instances of the singular favour which God hath in some instances shown to praying families. It shall suffice to mention one. A credible historian tells us, that about a century ago there was an earthquake in Switzerland, by which part of a mountain was thrown down, and it fell upon a village that stood under it, and crushed every house and inhabitant to pieces, except the corner of one cottage, where the master of the house with his poor family were found praying together unto God.† It is true, indeed, that the families of the wicked sometimes prosper; but their prosperity is a snare and a curse; and, as I was lately observing, they have their good things in this life, and real good is not in their hands. This leads me to ask, further,

6. Is it not the distinguishing character of wicked families, that they do not call upon God; that they say unto God, "Depart from us; what is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" They "forget God," live "without him in the world," "cast off fear and restrain prayer before him;" while it is described as the character of good men and their families, that they "know God," "walk with him," "call upon him," "set him always before them," and have "their eyes ever towards the Lord." Can you bear that your families should be like atheistical and profane families, and have no other distinction from the wickedest families in the town, but mere civility? Is Christianity such a reproach, that you are unwilling to be known for Christian families? Would you be like them now, with whom you would dread to have your eternal portion? Let me entreat you to take this thought into consideration, likewise,

7. How will you answer to God for yourselves, for the souls committed to your care, and the injury you have done to religion? You believe that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." You are stewards; your authority and influence over others is a talent which you are to use for the glory of God and the support of religion; and you are to give an account of yourselves to God how you have improved this talent. You are to stand before God, not only in your personal, but relative capacity; as one that had the charge of a family, and are to give an account

* Ezek. xliv. 30. † Polani Syntag. p. 841.

how you have watched for the souls entrusted with you; those souls for which Christ died. But there is an awful scene opens before this. There is a parting-time coming, when you must die and leave your families behind. And what a sad parting will it be, if you have never prayed together; and done little or nothing for their spiritual good; never or very seldom solemnly commended them to God in their presence; showed no concern for the souls of your servants, to teach them the fear of God and how to pray. Will not this neglect occasion many painful reflections then? And with what comfort can you commend them to God in a dying hour, when you are conscious that his worship hath been neglected by you? It will be little consolation then, that you have left your families wealthy, and bequeathed large fortunes to your children, while you have neglected the appointed means to instruct and sanctify their hearts, to regulate their tempers, fit them for usefulness in this life, and happiness in the next. With what comfort can you appear before "the God of all the families of the earth," under the guilt of this neglect? When he inquires, What hast thou done for thy family that is left behind? when he addresseth you in the words of Jeremiah, "Where is the flock that was given thee to keep, thy beautiful flock?" you will be ashamed to say how rich you have left them, and what external accomplishments you endeavoured to furnish them with. And then consider, if they perish through your fault, what a sad meeting you will have with them in another world. To see those consigned to misery and woe, who have lost their souls through your neglect, and to have this as an article in your own charge and an aggravation of your own misery, will make it unspeakably dreadful. Whereas, had you called upon God's name daily, and taught your children and servants his fear, you might comfortably have committed them to God, and met them with joy at the right hand of Christ. Once more, consider how you will answer to God for the injury you have done to religion, and the corruption you may be the means of spreading through succeeding generations. We have already shown you, what good influence family worship may have to promote the religion of your families and those that may descend from them. "While a desire of imitation is confessedly a strong principle of action, one bright domestic pattern, in a person of superior character and authority, in calling his family to devotion every morning and evening, will have more effect upon all beneath and about him, than a thousand dry instructions."* But if you neglect this duty, it will encourage and authorize their neglect. They may omit it in their families; and their children's children may omit it; so that perhaps before the end of the world, there may be hundreds, and even thousands, descended from you, who have

* Seed.

in effect learnt irreligion and impiety in your houses, and from your example; or at least have never learnt religion there. Yea, perhaps Christ, when he cometh to judgment, may find some of your descendants among the wicked, who shall be burnt up as stubble; and their wickedness and misery may be traced up as high as your neglect of family worship, and be in some degree charged to your account. Now, can you say this is not probable? and if it be probable, is it not very shocking? You had a thousand times better leave your families beggars, than leave them enemies to God and strangers to prayer. Whereas by a faithful care in this duty you may leave a sweet savour behind you; a praying seed, that shall be the support of religion in every future age, and your joy and crown of rejoicing at the appearance of Jesus Christ. I firmly believe there will not be a heavier article in any man's charge at the great day than this, that he cut off the entail of religion in his family; suffered it to die in his hands, after it had been conveyed down to him by his pious ancestors; and left an ungodly seed, to be the reproach of Christianity, and spread impiety and corruption through all succeeding generations to the end of the world. These circumstances and reflections I beseech you to take into serious consideration, that you may see what guilt you contract, and what complicated mischief you bring upon yourselves and your families, by the neglect of this duty. As I hope some are awakened by them, I would address them,

2. By way of advice. And here, I exhort young persons, who are setting out in life, when they enter on new relations, or have houses of their own, that they immediately set up an altar to God, as their God and the God of their fathers. Nothing is more proper and necessary, nothing so comfortable and advantageous, as when they are beginning the world to begin it with God; to dedicate their houses to the Lord, and turn them into sanctuaries to his honour. As their cares and temptations increase, it is fit they should in all their ways acknowledge God; and as they stand in new capacities and relations, in them they should serve and glorify him. Thus will they engage his blessing on all their relations and employments. As to those heads of families, who have hitherto entirely or generally neglected it, I would advise, exhort, and beseech them to set themselves solemnly and seriously to this work, and to begin it immediately. If you defer it, sirs, and put it off to a more convenient season, I fear you will never do it. If what hath been said upon the subject hath wrought any conviction upon your minds, and your consciences tell you you ought to neglect it no longer, hearken to their admonitions immediately. The enemy of souls will now be peculiarly busy to prevent it; raise a thousand difficulties in your way, and increase your natural disinclination to it. You know there is nothing to be done in the

common affairs of your families without steadiness and resolution; much less in affairs of the soul, where the world, the flesh, and the devil draw a different way. Let me exhort you further, to begin it with all the solemnity you can. Call your children and servants together; let them know that you are convinced you have been in the wrong, and you now call them together to join with you in performing your family homage to God. Be not ashamed to make this acknowledgment to your family, and to express your deep humiliation before God for your past neglect. I will venture to say, you never looked so great and honourable, as when making such a confession; and as far as your domestics have the grace of God in their hearts, they will never esteem and reverence you so much as when you are making it. Further, having once begun, never omit it at the returning seasons. You will be often tempted to this at first. Your family worship will be like a newly planted tree, that must be propped up and carefully watched, lest it be torn up or shaken out of its place before it have taken root. It hath been lost in many families through this neglect. One omission hath made way and furnished an excuse for another, and the disinclination to it hath increased. Repeated acts form a habit; and it will, by care, become as regular as your meals, and as little interfere with your business. Again, call your servants to this duty, and insist upon their joining with you in it. I fear, in some praying families, this regard to servants is neglected; and lest they should be a little hindered in their business, they are deprived of the advantages of family worship. But this shows an inordinate love of the world in their masters, and a want of Christian charity to their souls. You call them from your business to their meals; and why not to worship? The common proverb, "A whet is no let," is as applicable to the concerns of the soul as the body. Let me exhort you to seek strength from heaven for the performance of it; to conquer that sinful shame and unmanly cowardice which keeps you from it. Earnestly pray in secret, that God would give you wisdom and resolution to discharge your duty. Be frequently offering up that petition of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray;" and remember and plead the promise of the Spirit, as "a spirit of grace and supplication." The more your temptations to neglect or omit this duty increase, be the more diligent in your applications to the throne of grace. And let us all remember, that the more serious and lively we are in our secret devotions, the better prepared we shall be for social worship. If there are any here, who once maintained family worship but have cast it off, I look upon them with pity and with horror; as persons in whose hearts the love of the world hath destroyed the love of God; who have "left off to be wise and to do good, and who had better never have known the way of righteousness than thus to have forsaken it." And

if I could have the least hope that any motives would prevail upon them, I would urge them to return to their duty; but I fear they are grown "past feeling." Upon the whole, let me beseech those, who neglect this duty, to consider the arguments and motives which have been urged for the practice of it, and to judge of them as in the sight of God. If you will not do this, it shows a bad cause and a guilty conscience; and it is not in my power to do any thing more than pray, that God would convince you of your error and restore your souls to the way of duty and happiness. If you will go on to neglect it, I am persuaded you will have an ill opinion of yourselves for so doing. Your own consciences will be uneasy. I am sure you cannot be satisfied in your own minds; and in consequence of these repeated addresses, your consciences will be yet more uneasy. "The remembrance of these exhortations and arguments will" (as a serious writer* expresseth it) "continue to torment you, if it cannot reform you; and if you do not forsake the house of God, as well as exclude him and his worship from your own houses, you will meet with further uneasiness; for new exhortations and admonitions will arm reflection with new reproaches. In this uncomfortable manner you will probably go on, till what hath been the grief and shame of your life becomes the affliction of your dying bed; nor will I presume to assure you that the God, whose worship you have thus neglected, will answer your last cries for pardon. The best that you can expect from your consciousness of this guilt is, to pass trembling to your final doom. But whatever that doom be, you must acquit your minister, who hath given you this faithful warning. And these discourses (transcribed as it were in the records of divine omniscience) shall testify, that a matter of so great importance hath not been wholly neglected, nor coldly and slightly urged, by one that wisheth well to you and your families, and watcheth for your souls, as one that must give account." And as it will be his joy before the bar of God, that he hath given you these admonitions, so he earnestly wishes and prays that it may then be your joy, that you have faithfully and obediently received them. Amen.

* Doddridge.

DISCOURSE VI.

A SERIOUS ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO PRACTISE FAMILY WORSHIP.

PSALM CI. 2.

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

I AM once more to address you, my brethren, concerning family worship. I have largely laid before you the many arguments from reason and scripture for it; and endeavoured to show the insufficiency of those excuses which are often made for the neglect of it. In my last discourse I seriously expostulated with those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of it. And if any, after all, will live and die in this neglect, I must leave them to answer for it in the presence of God. I am now, in the last place,

VII. *To make a serious address to those who practise family worship.*

Our text very well suits such an address; because it contains a good resolution of David, and a good prayer suitable to such resolution. His resolution is, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect" or upright "way," meaning, undoubtedly, the way of religion. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart;" I will conduct the affairs of my family, and especially the worship of it, (for we have before shown that David did keep up family worship and bless his household,) I will conduct it, saith he, with thought and prudence, with integrity and stedfastness. There shall be no omissions or neglects of this duty in my family; but I will keep on in an even, steady course. And then there is a good prayer; "Oh, when wilt thou come unto me?" afford me and my family thy presence; teach me wisdom; make me steady and uniform in my religious conduct, and regular in my devotion; and continually dwell in my house? Such should be the resolution, and such the frequent prayer, of every head of a family. And I would now particularly exhort that it be the resolution and prayer of those who maintain family worship. It is the character of many of you that you do so, and I heartily rejoice in it, and bless God for it. I shall therefore address myself to you that are heads of praying families; to the several members of your families; I shall add a short word of exhortation to single persons; and so conclude the subject. I shall address,

1. To the heads of praying families. Let me exhort you, my dearly beloved, to reflect on what you have done with pleasure and thankfulness; to proceed in this duty with steadiness, regularity, and seriousness; to consider how it is capable of being improved and made more honourable and useful; and to endeavour that the ends of family worship may be answered, and its good effects manifested, in your whole conversation.

(1.) Reflect upon what you have done with pleasure and thankfulness. I hope you have been enabled to do this, while we have been showing you the reasonableness and advantage of this duty, and the guilt of those that neglect it. And let me exhort you to be often renewing the pleasing, grateful reflection. You have reason for this, as it is a duty so much neglected; and yet so honourable to God, and so useful to the families where it is practised. Adore his goodness, that you were trained up in religious families, or had your lot cast in such; and especially, that God hath given you wisdom and grace to "walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous," and to dedicate your houses unto him. Think with pleasure and thankfulness, that yours are not like other families, from which God is excluded; that he hath had a tribute of worship out of your houses, and his grace hath inclined you to "give yourselves unto prayer." As far as you are conscious to yourselves, that you have made a solemn business of it, take the comfort of it, and pity and pray for those that deprive themselves of such comfort. If you have any satisfaction in the character of your children or servants, and reason to believe that your domestic worship hath contributed thereto, this will be an additional reason for thankfulness. You will, nevertheless, see cause to be humbled for many defects which have attended your social devotion. After you have heard so much concerning the nature and importance of the duty, it will lead you to bewail those defects before God, and to entreat his pardon. Yet you may, and should, recollect your care and integrity in this duty with pleasure; ascribing, at the same time, to divine grace, those measures of the gift of prayer which he hath bestowed upon you, all the comfort and advantage you have found by family worship, and the honour you have done to religion thereby. Let me exhort you,

(2.) To proceed in this duty with steadiness, regularity, and seriousness. There are many, whose consciences will not allow them to neglect this duty entirely, yet are not regular and steady in it. They perform it only now and then; on a Lord's day; when affairs of peculiar difficulty are before them; or when they meet with some remarkable family deliverance or affliction. "In trouble they visit the Lord, and pour out a prayer when his chastening is upon them." But certainly it ought to be performed every day. The general arguments, that prove family worship to be a duty, prove it to be a daily duty.

And this is plain from the scripture evidence already produced. Our Lord directs us to pray for our daily bread, day by day; therefore it ought never to be neglected. If any particular circumstances arise, as in the case of sudden sickness, or some indispensable business, which may require its being once omitted, great care must be taken in judging of such cases of necessity, lest Satan get an advantage over you, and lead you to neglect it when there is no necessity. I add, further, that family worship ought to be performed twice a day at least. I fear, yea I know, there are many families negligent herein. Their domestic worship is omitted every morning, except it be on the Lord's day, and in some families even then. But consider, sirs, doth not the light of nature dictate both morning and evening devotion? Doth it not seem reasonable to adore the Author of nature at these returning periods? to seek his blessing upon the affairs of the day, as well as his protection at night? Nay, let me ask, whether you do not seem to need prayer in the morning more than in the evening, on account of the duties, temptations, and dangers that may be before you in the day? Have you not greater need to beg divine assistance, protection, and grace, when you go out into a tempting, ensnaring world, than when you go to bed? Consider, further, what the scripture hints upon this head. It is spoken of as a thing highly good and becoming to "show forth his loving-kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night." And there can be no reason assigned, why this should suit a particular person, and not a family. It was appointed under the law, that there should be a daily sacrifice, every morning and every evening. To this there is probably a reference in many places of scripture, particularly when the apostle saith, "Pray without ceasing;" and these sacrifices were called "the continual burnt-offering." There are many passages where we read of prayer and supplication "day and night," of praying "in the morning and the evening," and the like. It is therefore really astonishing to me, how any pious persons can neglect family worship in a morning; can enter upon the business of life without asking God's blessing; can venture themselves, their children and servants, into a world of snares and temptations, without commending them to the protection and grace of God; and can act so contrary to the dictates of reason and scripture. This is curtailing God's homage, and paying him but half the rent due to him: and whether he will accept the half instead of the whole, you will do well to consider. Some good men have prayed in their families thrice a day. Daniel prayed thrice a day in his house; and indeed, there will be some resemblance to this in all religious families, that is, at least about noon, there will be a serious solemn address to God, in reference to the use of his creatures, which are to be sanctified by prayer. These arguments I must leave with your consciences; only add-

ing, in the words of Mr. Baxter, "A good appetite to religion would best cure these omissions and neglects. If God should say in general to all men, You shall eat as often as will do you good; the sick stomach would say, Once a day is enough, and as much as God requires. But a sound constitution and a strong appetite would say, Twice a day is little enough; thrice is better. Thus a good and healthful heart is of great help in expounding God's word, especially his general commands. That which men do not heartily love, they will not believe to be their duty." Further, let me exhort you to be stedfast and regular in the practice of it, whatever guests you have in your houses. Consider with yourselves, whether it is not a false and mean shame to decline this service, to put off or conceal the practice, when friends or even strangers are present. Why should you be more shy of letting them know you have stated times for worship than for eating and drinking; or more backward in asking them to join with you in that service, than to eat and drink with you? And this, as we have formerly observed, may awaken them to a sense of their duty, if they have neglected it. He that partakes of the provision, ought to partake of the religion, of the family. Mr. Fuller, in his Meditations, observes, that he had once a person of quality lodged with him, and out of excess of modesty he forebore the duty of his family that night; on which he makes a penitential reflection, acknowledges his great fault, and makes solemn resolutions and vows never to be guilty of the like again. Let me likewise exhort you to perform this duty with great seriousness. Be careful that it never be performed in a hurry; that it doth not degenerate into a mere form, and want a proper decorum. "God is greatly to be feared in all the assemblies of his saints," whether larger or smaller, "and to be had in reverence by all that approach him." Take care that your own and your families' coming to it, behaviour at it, and going from it, be decent, grave, and solemn. And sharply reprove, and if that will not do correct, every indecency of your children and servants in the time of worship. Let it be introduced with a solemn pause; remembering to whom you are about to speak. Let your minds be engaged in the great work, and "do it heartily as unto the Lord." You had better trifle any where than at prayer; better affront any one than the great and holy God. "Cursed be the deceiver that hath a male in his flock, and vows and sacrifices to the Lord his God a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."* I exhort those that maintain family worship,

(3.) To consider how it is capable of being improved, and made more honourable and useful. And here, I think it is a matter of very great importance, that, if possible, you keep to fixed, stated

* Mal. i. 14.

hours for the performance of this duty. You have such hours for your meals, and contrive your business accordingly; and why not for worship? Unless you engage yourselves to observe stated times, and inure your minds, by practice, to the observance of them, you will be often tempted to neglect or defer it, and may be easily seduced from it. The sooner you perform your family worship in the morning the better. And here I must reprove the laziness of some heads of families, who are not careful to be up in proper time; but their family worship is deferred till late in the day, or almost noon; in consequence of which, the children are gone to school, the servants to their work, and many interruptions and disturbances happen in the performance of it, which might have been prevented by an earlier hour. I cannot say, in an evening, the later the better; though better late than never. The present custom of having our hours of business and meals later than our fathers, especially late evening visits whether to our friends or public places, are mischievous both to personal and family order and godliness. In this case, children are gone to bed, servants fatigued, and all fitter for sleep than prayer; not to mention the injury which such late people do to the more regular families of their friends. If you are obliged, or think it right, to spend the evening abroad, let family worship be performed before you go out. But a man's own house ought, in general, to be his place of entertainment in the evening; and especially that of men of business. This is almost the only time when they can taste the sweets of domestic life, enjoy the company of their families, and teach them wisdom and piety: therefore their evenings should not be always, nor often, spent abroad. Let me exhort you, likewise, to consider whether your worship is not capable of being improved, by reading the scriptures, and singing the praises of God. His law requires that you "teach his words diligently to your children, and speak of them when you lie down and rise up." To read the scriptures in your families is a becoming respect to the sacred oracles, the way to improve your own minds and theirs. Reading the scriptures by the heads of families at their worship, makes them more instructive and affecting; tends to compose the mind and fit it for a solemn address to God. And where business doth not necessarily hinder, some short useful commentary should be added. I would likewise inculcate upon all families, where it can be performed, the use of psalmody; as it is an evident duty; a proper way of expressing our thankfulness to God; and as it tends to impress the minds of children and young people, perhaps more than prayer. Thus should "the voice of rejoicing be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous." "They do well," saith Mr. Philip Henry, "who pray in their families; they do better, that pray and read the scriptures; but they who add singing do best of all. And

Christians should earnestly desire and labour, to do the very best." Let me advise those who use free prayer, to endeavour to adapt their prayers to the circumstances of their families, and not rest entirely in general petitions and thanksgivings. Let them carefully observe the providence of God, relating to their families; their mercies, afflictions, deliverances, wants, and dangers, and express them before him. When they hear of calamities happening to other families, let them express their thankfulness for the goodness of God to their own; and particularly pray for their children and servants, which will have a great influence on their minds. So Job offered up sacrifices for his children, "according to the number of them all." Thus only will your prayer be, properly, family prayer. When you read the scriptures before, endeavour that your prayers may correspond with what you have read, which will impress it more strongly on the hearts of your family and on your own. I would further advise that you do not make your family worship long and tedious. Here prudence is to be exercised; and you are to consider what is most likely to serve the ends of religion. A quarter of an hour spent with life and spirit, is a great deal better than hours together spent in a tedious way, with many repetitions, which makes religion a burden and a grievance, and hath prejudiced many against social prayer. I think, with the great Mr. Howe, that "that is applicable to the purposes of religion, which hath been applied to much meaner purposes; namely, that it is good to come from a meal with an appetite. It is good to come from the exercises of religion with such a lively relish upon our spirits as may make us wish for the return of the season." Let not your service, then, be long, but lively and to the purpose. The Lord's prayer, which is our model, is not long. Nor let it be so short, that it will be ended before your hearts are warmed and impressed with it. Finally, constantly remember to pray as Christians; to go forth in the strength of the Lord Jesus, maintaining continual regards to him, and an humble and cheerful dependence upon him, as your high priest and mediator, for assistance and acceptance in this and every religious duty.

(4.) Endeavour that the great ends of family worship be answered, and the good effects of it manifested, in your whole conversation. The design of it is to improve your spirits, and to make you sincerely and steadily holy. See that you do not rest in the outward form of religion, but (as the text expresseth it) "behave yourselves wisely in a perfect way." If you desire God's blessing on your worldly concerns, let honesty, diligence, prudence, and frugality appear in your conduct, and "guide your affairs with discretion." That a house of prayer should be a house of riot and intemperance; that there should be sometimes the language of devotion, and sometimes cursing, profane, scurrilous, obscene, or bitter words; that there should be prayer in the

house and cheating in the shop, or oppression in the field; how monstrous and shocking is this! That those who are daily praying together should be quarrelsome, froward, and peevish one with another; that the master of a praying family should tyrannize over his wife or children, and treat his servants with insolence and abuse; what a shameful inconsistency is here! I hope and believe such inconsistencies and irregularities are seldom found. But a caution on this head can never be unseasonable. Therefore take great care that you do not make religious services contemptible, and, like Eli's sons, "cause the offering of the Lord to be abhorred." See that you and your families "live in love," "that your prayers be not hindered;" that having begun the day with prayer, you be "in God's fear all the day long;" that religion attends you, wherever you go, and gives a tincture to all your words and actions. Men will judge of religion by the behaviour of those who are reputedly pious. "Though the children of this world know little of faith, repentance, and prayer, yet they are competent judges of honest bargains and fair open dealings. They are often themselves careful in these things; and therefore they who profess religion should walk very circumspectly, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."* It will be sad if you bring a reproach upon religion and family worship, and lead others to say, These are your praying men! Woe be to the man by whom such an offence cometh! Let your example teach your children and servants, as well as your prayers. And take care that you dispose of your children, in apprenticeship and marriage, in praying families. Remember, what most parents, and some religious parents too, forget, that that is best for their children, which is best for their souls. Earnestly pray that God would come unto you, and assist you in this and every branch of your duty. Upon the whole, family prayer is an honour to you; be not you a dishonour to it. These are the exhortations I would urge upon heads of families who maintain worship in them. I proceed to address,

2. To the branches of praying families. Let wives endeavour to further this good work in their houses, and encourage their husbands to begin it, or to go on with it. If they cannot prevail (as they have no authority over the husband, but persuasion) it is their duty to pray with their children and maid-servants apart, as queen Esther prayed with her maids. It is their duty, in the absence of their husbands, to lead the devotion of the family, and thus to guide their house well; or to do it, with their consent, when they are present. When you, who are heads of families, are abroad, let some suitable forms of prayer be put into the hands of your wives, or one of the elder children, or a serious servant; that

* Philip Henry.

religious services may not be omitted, and the daily sacrifice cease. There is a remarkable circumstance mentioned in the life of Mr. Bailey, a minister of New England; that his mother took him one day, while but young, and, calling the family together, made him pray with them. His father, a man of a licentious conversation, coming to know how suitably the child had prayed with the family, it smote his soul with great conviction, and proved the beginning of his conversion. You that are children in praying families, you can never be sufficiently thankful to the goodness of God, which hath cast your lot in such houses. Oh, value your privilege and carefully improve it. The same would I say to servants in praying families. "The lines are fallen to you in pleasant places, and you have a goodly heritage." Are you called to daily reading and prayer, to a strict observance of the sabbath, and kept from profaning it? so much the better. If you do not think this a privilege and a favour, the time will come when you will think so, and condemn yourselves for not thinking so sooner. Great will be your guilt, children and servants, if you go out of such families unenlightened and unedified. Let me exhort you to be careful and forward to attend such opportunities. Your parents, masters, and mistresses only see your compliance with the outward form; but God seeth your hearts; whether you like reading and prayer or dislike it; whether you concur in it or not; whether you come to it with aversion or desire. And be sure to remember that family prayer will not excuse you from secret prayer; prayer in your own chambers, and on your own account. It is a great reproach upon any one, to be bad in a good family; to be a prayerless wretch in a praying house; to have no desires after God, no humility, no gratitude, no love, while prayer is daily presented. To continue ungodly in a godly family, or to go ungodly out of it; what a horrid thing will this be! What dreadful reflections will it occasion hereafter in this life, or in an eternity of misery! There may be some circumstances, in which it may be lawful and necessary for servants to leave praying families, and providence may cast their lot in prayerless houses. In this case it is their duty to be so much the more diligent in reading and secret prayer. But if they choose such houses because they dislike the work of devotion and religious restraint, they are very criminal in the sight of God, and show a wretched stupidity and hardness of heart. Let all who have been educated in praying families remember what God and man will expect from them, and often consider what they do more than others. And while they continue in such families, let them show all readiness and pleasure in attending on family worship, and endeavour to improve it to their edification and usefulness in future life, and preparation for eternity.

3. I cannot conclude this subject without a word of exhorta-

tion to single persons, or those who are lodgers or boarders in other persons' houses.

As for you, my friends, if the houses in which you reside are houses of prayer, it is your duty to desire leave to join in it, in whatever manner or form the worship be conducted, provided it be grave and edifying. But in prayerless houses, if you have a servant of your own, you are undoubtedly to pray with him or her, as your family, and committed to your care; as in the instance of Esther, mentioned above: and you must so much the more carefully give yourselves to reading, meditation, and prayer in private; teach and admonish yourselves, and improve every public opportunity of joining in social prayer. Let your tempers and lives also show that you live near to God, and keep up communion with him in secret. Thus will your own chambers be a little sanctuary to you, as "the house of God and the gate of heaven." Let me exhort all, especially the young, to cultivate the gift of prayer, by studying the scriptures, committing to memory the devotional expressions with which they abound, or which are to be found in pious writers, and endeavouring to impress their hearts with an habitual and serious sense of God. Let them also earnestly implore the assistance of the Spirit of God to "help their infirmities, and teach them to pray." I beg leave to observe, upon this subject, that associations of young people for reading, prayer, and religious conference, have not only a good effect to instruct and confirm them in religion, but to fit and dispose them for the performance of family worship, when they enter upon houses of their own. They tend also to remove the chief objections against it, by increasing their qualifications for it, and their love to every thing that will promote their religious interests.

Thus, my brethren, I have finished what I intended upon this important and interesting subject. It only remains that I commit it and you to the blessing of God; earnestly praying, in the language of the text, that he would come unto you, and incline you to the steady, regular practice of this duty; increase your gifts and graces; meet and bless you in all your acts of secret and social worship; and enable you, in every respect, to "walk within your houses with a perfect heart." I have one favour to beg of you; that when, in your family worship, you are making intercession for others, and especially the ministers and churches of Christ, you would put up a petition or two expressly for your own ministers, and the church to which you stand related. We desire this for our own sakes and for yours; as it will dispose you, your children, and servants, to pay the more serious regard to our admonitions, and to esteem us in love for our work's sake; and it may procure for us more of the influences of the Spirit to revive the interest of religion. May that Spirit, as "a Spirit of grace and supplication," be poured

out upon you all! May all your houses be houses of prayer and piety! And by these exercises may you and yours be trained up to join the devout, holy, and happy family above, which serveth God day and night, without weariness, without ceasing, and without end! I conclude this discourse and subject with the words of Joshua: "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord," after all that hath been said to engage you to it, "choose you this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

SIX DISCOURSES

ON THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION

OF THE

LORD'S DAY.

WITH TWO DISCOURSES ON THE HEAVENLY STATE, CONSIDERED UNDER THE IDEA OF A SABBATH.

DISCOURSE I.

THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE UNDER TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY HOLY, CONSIDERED.

GENESIS II. 3.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.

As the sanctification of the Lord's day is the great support of virtue and religion in the world, and the means of strengthening and increasing them in particular souls, I design, with the divine assistance, to give you, in as short a compass as I can, a general view of the subject; an account of what the scripture says and requires, concerning our obligation to observe one day in seven holy to the Lord; and what the most considerable writers on the subject have said, for proving and enforcing it. To introduce the subject, I have chosen the account which Moses gives us of the first institution of the sabbath. In the foregoing chapter he had informed us of the creation of the world in six days; and then adds, that "on the seventh day God ended," or, as it may be rendered, "God had ended his work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day." This cannot mean that he was tired and wanted repose; for "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary;" it only means that he ceased from work, as he had finished what he then intended, and completely executed the plan he had formed. Moses then adds in the text, that God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," the particular meaning of which I shall afterwards explain, "because that in it he had rested from all his works

which God had created and made." In treating this subject, I propose to show,

I. The obligations Christians are under to observe the Lord's day.

II. The manner in which it is to be observed and kept holy.

III. I shall urge some arguments and motives to engage you to keep it holy: and then,

IV. Conclude the subject with some natural and useful inferences. And may the Son of man, who is "Lord of the sabbath," graciously prosper this feeble attempt to promote the more religious observation of it.

I. *I am to show the obligations Christians are under to observe and sanctify the Lord's day.*

To show their obligations in general, it might be sufficient to consider what the New Testament saith upon this head; but as there hath been a good deal of debate in the world about it, it will be proper to take a larger view of the subject, and to consider what reason dictates, and what the Old Testament required, concerning the public worship of God at stated times. By this means, I hope, we shall have a stronger idea of our obligations to observe it, and shall be better able to judge of the manner in which it is to be observed. What is most important and useful on the subject may, I think, be comprehended under the following propositions, which I desire may be considered in their connexion with one another.

1. The public worship of God is a most important and necessary duty.

2. It is reasonable and necessary that some stated times should be appointed for it.

3. It is reasonable and proper that there should be an agreement between different communities to worship God at the same time.

4. At the creation of the world, God appointed one day in seven to be separated for religious uses.

5. When he set apart the Jewish nation to himself, he expressly commanded the observation of the sabbath day.

6. That command is so placed, and so expressed in the law of Moses, as to show that it is worthy of peculiar and distinguished regard.

7. Christ and his apostles directed and encouraged the separating the first day of the week for the service of God.

8. It is most evident that that day hath been esteemed sacred by Christians in every age: to which I add,

9. That the observation of it is, upon the whole, of such great moment, that Christianity and religion will stand or fall with it.

Give me leave, my brethren, to illustrate these particulars; which I will do as clearly as the nature of the subject and my

capacity will admit. To begin then with that which is the foundation and support of all the rest:

1. The public worship of God is a most important and necessary duty. This appears from the light of nature, and may be argued from principles of reason only, without any knowledge of revelation, or even the supposition of it. The worship of God implies in it an acknowledgment of his matchless perfections, of our constant dependence upon him, and innumerable obligations to him: so that it is as much a dictate of reason and morality, as any of the offices of justice and charity, or the duties of self-government. The one as directly results from our relation to God, and receiving every thing we possess from him, as the other results from our relation to our fellow-creatures and the regard we owe to our own interest and happiness. Reason teacheth us to ask favours from men with respect and humility; and to acknowledge the receipt of them with gratitude. It is therefore fit we should pray to God with the most humble and reverent disposition, and praise him with the warmest gratitude. To this it must be added, that public communities and bodies of men are as much under the protection and care of God, as the particular persons that compose them. They, as members of society, have distinct wants, dependences, and mercies, which ought to be separately acknowledged; that is, in social worship. They have social and public sins to lament, miseries to deprecate, and favours to ask. Man, as a creature formed for society, ought to acknowledge and worship God in society. It is a proper acknowledgment that we are, in common, indebted to God, and depend upon him for social blessings. By such worship a public honour is done to the great God, the universal Parent, which he highly deserves. Such acts of worship are necessary to preserve upon men's hearts a constant sense of God's providence and government, and their necessary dependence upon him. They keep alive that veneration for God, and sense of his universal presence, which is the great support of government and of the peace and good order of the world. Further, it is fit God should be worshipped by many together; because the united devotion of an assembly hath a natural tendency to animate the piety and zeal of each particular member of it; as paying homage to a common governor, and reverencing a common parent, hath a tendency to promote, in all that concur in it, the regard and gratitude they owe to him. It is also adapted to promote benevolence, friendship, and good correspondence among themselves, by allaying any heats and reconciling any differences that may arise among them. God, as the author and preserver of our lives, deserves to be honoured, and hath a right to our best services; and honouring and serving him in public tends to promote our veneration for him, our obedience to him, our love to one another, and to increase the pleasures of

devotion. Reason also suggests to us that public instructions are useful to support the honour of religion, and expose the malignity of sin; to inform the ignorant and inconsiderate, who in every place and nation are the majority; to guard men against the snares of life, strengthen good resolutions, and fit them for usefulness in this life, and happiness in the next. It is proper these should be given in assemblies, as it is a common concern; as by this means knowledge is more easily and widely communicated; and observing others attentive and affected hath a natural tendency to make us so. Let me just add, under this head, that the importance and necessity of public worship hath appeared evident to the understandings of mankind in all ages and nations. Scarce any nation hath been so ignorant and barbarous, but there hath been some kind of homage paid by it to its deities; and care hath been taken by all lawgivers, by instituting public worship, to support the opinion of superior overruling powers. Public worship then appears a most reasonable and necessary duty.

2. It is reasonable and necessary that some stated times should be appointed for it, in order to the joint performance of it. It is necessary that those actions, which are our indispensable duty, should have some seasons allotted to them. Our obligation to public worship carries in it an obligation of devoting and consecrating some time to it. Without such an appointment, some would never worship God at all, and others only upon some extraordinary emergencies. It seems agreeable to reason, that both men and beasts should have some certain portions of time allowed them for rest, more than just the sleep of the night; as constant unceasing labour every day would wear them out too fast, and quickly render them incapable of those uses and services for which the Creator designed them. Reason directs us, that such creatures as we, dwelling in bodies, in a world full of labour, temptations, and amusements, should have some for retreating from them, in order more effectually to attend to the concerns of our immortal spirits. This is necessary to fix deeper upon the heart the principles, rules, and motives of religion; to lessen the influence the world hath upon us; to spiritualize the soul, and train it up for immortality. And it seems agreeable to reason and common sense, that it is better to appoint one whole day for religious purposes, in a certain period of time, than to take a part of several days: because this is more likely to answer the purposes of religion, to keep the concerns of this and another world more distinct and separate, and prevent making frequent interruptions in the necessary business of this life, which would be attended with great inconvenience to families and to society. These days should not be so frequent as to hinder our necessary pursuit of secular business and providing for the body; and yet should be so near to

one another as to prevent the thoughts of religion from being lost, and enable the mind to recollect them with greater ease. To this may be added, that as God is the author of our time, and by his preserving and providing goodness lengthens it out to us, it is fit some part of it should be devoted to his more immediate service; and that the God in whose hand the lives and times of all mankind are, should be devoutly acknowledged by them.

3. It is reasonable and proper that there should be an agreement between different communities or societies, to worship God at the same time. This should be the case at least of those who live in the same nation and under the same government. Without such an agreement upon a fixed time, the appointments of different persons and societies would interfere; all would be disorder and confusion; some observing a day in a religious manner; others following their business or their sports, which would be an interruption to the worshippers. Societies, be they small or large, have a mutual dependence upon, and transactions with one another; and it would be a hindrance both to secular and religious business, if some were engaged in one, and some in the other. It is of great importance, in order that the ends of worship be answered, that it be carried on with due attention, and every thing avoided which would interrupt and divert it. Without an agreement in some stated times, there would be frequent interruptions; as is often the case in week-day lectures. Besides, there is a particular beauty and advantage in a whole nation or large community worshipping together. The reflection is pleasing to every devout and benevolent mind. It tends to promote love, and increase our kind regards to our fellow worshippers. It is peculiarly honourable to God, and emboldens our hope of the acceptance and success of prayer, when large multitudes join in it. By such an agreement, also, public instruction is communicated to many at once, and the instruction, being of general concern, becomes more striking and useful. To this I may add, that there should be some stated day for public worship, that men may contrive their worldly affairs so as to join in it; and that the stupid and inconsiderate may be obliged to attend such services, and receive such instructions, as may be likely to promote their virtue and usefulness.

Thus far, then, we have gone by the light of nature and the dictates of reason. And could we go no further, this would be sufficient to show the reasonableness and importance of observing that day which the laws of our country require to be kept in a religious manner. What hath been already said may be illustrated by observing, that in almost all the nations of the earth there have been stated days and times for public worship, in which they have laid aside their common concerns, and solemnly engaged in sacrifices and other rites, which they ap-

prehended to be of a religious nature, and acceptable to their deities. It seems, therefore, to be an evident part of the law of nature, and agreeable to the general sense of mankind, that there should be such stated times for public worship. And as men, were it left to them to appoint such times, would probably either overdo or underdo, it seems worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness to appoint such a proportion of time for rest and religious worship, as may neither, through its frequency, break in upon the necessary cares of life, and through its unfrequency, lose its valuable intention and effect. We have good assurance he hath done this; and shall find that both reason and revelation herein beautifully agree, and increase our obligation to sabbath sanctification. I go on therefore to observe,

4. At the creation of the world God appointed one day in seven to be separated for religious purposes. When he had formed man upon the earth, he would not leave him without so important a means of promoting religion. Accordingly we are told in our text, that God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it;" he distinguished it from, and exalted it above, the rest of the days; blessed it for the use of mankind. He sanctified it, that is (as the word often signifies) separated it from a common to a religious and holy use. It is also said, in the fourth commandment, where this original law is referred to, that "God blessed and hallowed it;" plainly intimating, that God would communicate some particular favours on that day; command a blessing on those that observed it, and make it a comfortable and happy day to them. This, you will observe, is the first institution or express law of God, after he made the world. It was appointed because God had then ceased from his work. It was therefore intended to lead men's thoughts to God, as the creator of all things, and thereby preserve them from idolatry and impiety; from worshipping the creature and neglecting the Creator. This law, you will also observe, was given to man, while he continued innocent, before his apostasy and fall from God and his duty. It was given to Adam when in the full vigour of body and mind. And if the observation of such a portion of time was needful and proper for him in these circumstances, it is undoubtedly much more so for us, his degenerate offspring. Our Lord seems to refer to this primitive institution, when he observes that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath;"* it was ordained for the rest and benefit of men. Some persons indeed have suggested that the text was introduced by Moses here, by way of anticipation, and only refers to the fourth commandment, which was given to the Jews about two thousand five hundred years after. And this they argue, because there is (as they apprehend) no mention made of the observance of the sabbath between Adam and Moses. But the notion appears to me very groundless. We can never think (as I hinted above)

* Mark ii. 27.

that God would leave men without separating some time for his worship by his own express authority. There seems no reason why Moses should have mentioned the institution, just after his account of the creation, except it was then to take place. Besides, there are some reasons, from the short history of the patriarchs, to believe they did observe it; particularly in the history of Noah, where we read of his sending the dove out of the ark at the end of seven days, and again at the end of other seven days.* This seems to intimate that Noah measured his time by weeks, of seven days each; and that the seventh day was a day of some peculiar solemnity. And some have thought that Cain and Abel's offering their sacrifice "in process of time,"† (or as the original is, "at the end of the days") is a more early intimation of the observation of the sabbath. This may be further argued from the command which Moses delivered to the Israelites, even while they were in Egypt, concerning the observation of the passover, that "on the first day of unleavened bread, there should be a holy convocation;"‡ a day on which they were to "do no manner of work," and were to assemble for the service of God. A day of holy convocation is in other places called "a sabbath."§ As Moses doth not explain the meaning of this expression, it seems plain that they knew it, and had observed sabbaths and holy convocations in Egypt. But what seems to put this matter beyond doubt, is the history of the first falling of the manna upon the Israelites, above a month before the giving of the law. We are told that "on the sixth day the Israelites had gathered twice as much bread as they had done on each preceding day."‖ This astonished the people very much, as it was done without design; till Moses explained the reason of this miracle in those very remarkable words, "This is that which the Lord hath said; to-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord." Now we know not when the Lord had said this, but at the creation. It is added, when "some of the people went out to gather on the sabbath," the Lord said, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore shall ye not go out of your place on that day." Moses, you see, talks to them of the sabbath, as of an institution well known among them; and God describes it as one of the commands of the law he had already given them. So that here was a standing miracle, during their abode in the wilderness, to confirm the divine institution and authority of the sabbath, as the manna never fell on that day. Some have thought, that during their settlement in Egypt they might have been obliged by their tyrannical masters to neglect the observation of it; and the Israelites having been there above two hundred years, the knowledge of it might be almost lost among them; therefore God, by this miracle, called it to their mind, and renewed the

* Gen. viii. 12. † Gen. iv. 3. ‡ Exod. xii. 16.
§ Lev. xxiii. 24, 32, 39. ‖ Exod. xvi. 22.

solemn command to observe it on this striking occasion. In like manner the original law of a man's having only one wife, though a law from the creation and a natural law of God, was in a great measure lost in the world, till Christ by his doctrine restored it to its authority. But it seems more probable, from what I have just mentioned, that they had kept up the memory of the sabbath, and had observed it, as well as they could, in Egypt. The history indeed of the patriarchs is very short; and therefore we cannot expect particulars of the manner and time of their worship. But the silence of Moses on that head will no more prove that they did not observe the weekly sabbath, than the silence of the other sacred historians between Moses and David, who say not a word about it, will prove that it was not observed in that period, as it certainly was. The same may be said concerning circumcision; no instance of the use of that rite occurring from the time of Joshua to John the Baptist. Let me remark further on this head, how the fourth commandment is introduced; it is thus, "Remember the sabbath day; the seventh day is," not hereafter shall be, "the sabbath;" and in the repetition of that law in Deuteronomy, "Keep the sabbath day, as the Lord thy God commandeth thee;" where God speaks of the sabbath as a law already instituted, and enforces it by some arguments peculiar to themselves. Nor can I think it an observation of small importance in the present case, that in almost every nation of the earth which we read of in ancient or modern history, their time was divided by weeks. Now there appears to be no natural reason for this. The sun and moon by their revolutions measure out days, months, and years, but not weeks. There hath also been a considerable difference among ancient nations about the length of months and years, and different nations have had them of different lengths; but all their weeks have been exactly of seven days. Now I see not how this is to be accounted for, but by supposing that all the tribes of men were once acquainted with the institution of the sabbath; and had some original law for this division of time, which was conveyed by tradition through succeeding generations. And though the design of that division might be lost among some heathen nations, yet in many others, ancient and modern, one day in each week hath been a festival or religious solemnity. Some ancient writers among the heathen mention this, and speak of it as a general custom and practice; and two of the most ancient now extant speak of the seventh day as sacred.* Nor were they likely to borrow this custom from the Jews, whom they hated, but rather to have derived it from tradition. These arguments appear to me sufficient to prove that the sabbath was instituted from the beginning, and was observed in the world from Adam to Moses. We observe,

* Grotius de Veritate, &c.

5. When God set apart the Jews as his peculiar people, he expressly commanded the sanctification of the sabbath, that a seventh part of their time should be kept as a day of rest, and appropriated to his service. Thus the fourth commandment runs, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy: six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day," that is, after those six, "is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; ye shall do no work thereon." Nothing more is here expressly enjoined, but that after every six days' labour there should be one day of rest. Nothing is said of the different method of computing days, in order to fix upon the seventh as the day of rest. In the reason given for observing this commandment, it is said, "God rested the seventh day, and blessed" (not the seventh, but) "the sabbath day and hallowed it." It was blessed and hallowed, as appointed to be a day of rest, not as it was the seventh day of the week; and some have naturally concluded, that this remarkable change of expression was intended to show, that the seventh day of the week was not of the essence of the sabbath, and that this commandment would be still binding, whatever change of the day the great Lawgiver might make. "Sabbath" is a Hebrew word, which signifies rest, and intimates one great end for which it was instituted, namely, that men and beasts might rest from their usual labours. The reasons of the command are annexed to it, namely, God claims a peculiar property in the day; it is "the sabbath of the Lord thy God." His example is also urged; he "rested the seventh day;" and also his sanctifying and blessing it; "The Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." The Israelites were often reminded by Moses of this law; they were required to "keep God's sabbaths and reverence his sanctuary;" and an additional reason, a reason peculiar to them, was given, when Moses repeated the ten commandments to them, "Remember thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out with an out-stretched arm, therefore he commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."* It was commanded before, as a day of rest and religion; but the reason here given hath a reference to the particular circumstances of abstinence and rest, which were enjoined upon them, as the peculiar people of God, distinguished from other nations by a ceremonial law. It was not appointed to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt; the passover, an annual feast, was instituted for that end; and there was nothing in that deliverance likely to suggest the first idea of it, or render the observation of one day in seven proper. Now though, as we shall afterwards show, the observation of the seventh day is repealed, and we are required to observe the first day of the week; yet this law shows it to be reasonable that we should

* Deut. v. 15.

devote as much of our time to God's work and service as they did, and that he expressly requireth it of us. It is as reasonable that we should commemorate God's work of creation as they. We have a nobler deliverance to commemorate than they had; even our deliverance from ignorance and sin, death and hell, by Jesus Christ. Let me conclude this discourse with observing, that from hence it appears that the sanctification of the sabbath is agreeable to reason, and hath been the practice of God's people in all former ages of the world. "Stand ye, therefore, in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."*

DISCOURSE II.

THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE UNDER TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY HOLY, CONSIDERED.

EXODUS XX. 8—11.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

AMONG all the visible creatures, it is man's peculiar excellency, that he is capable of considering and worshipping his Maker, and was made for that purpose. But being composed of a body and a soul, the necessities of the meaner part take up a great portion of our little time, while we are in this life. God hath, therefore, wisely and graciously set apart a day for us, one of each seven, to be appropriated to our noblest employment, the contemplating and the solemn worshipping of his Majesty. I have already entered upon the proof of this doctrine, and have observed, that the public worship of God is a most important and necessary duty; it is fit that some stated times should be appointed for it; it is proper that there should be an agreement between different communities, to offer up their social worship at the same time; at the creation of the world God appointed every seventh day to be separated for religious uses; when he set apart the Jewish nation as his peculiar people, he expressly commanded the observation of the sabbath day. I now go on to observe,

6. This commandment is so placed and expressed in the Mo-

* Jer. vi. 16.

saic law, as to show that it deserves peculiar and distinguishing regard. Much hath been written by some learned men to prove that the fourth commandment is no part of the moral law; and as much by others, to prove that it is. By the moral law we mean those duties which result from the nature of things, our relation to God and one another; which may be known without an express revelation, and which oblige all mankind. Perhaps the many debates upon this head may be easily compromised by this remark; that the command is partly moral, partly positive.* The observation of some proportion of time, for rest and public worship, is of a moral nature, deducible from the light of nature, and universally binding. But the particular proportion of time, and any particular circumstances relating to the rest and the worship, may be altered at the divine pleasure. And this remark it will be of considerable importance for you to remember. The particular day of the week, and many circumstances relating to the rest and sacrifices of it, enjoined upon the Jews, were merely ceremonial. But there are several considerations that seem to me sufficient to prove that the general commandment here given to keep a stated day holy, is moral, and that the great lawgiver hath established this as a law universally binding, that after six days' labour about the business of this world, the seventh day should be kept holy. In the former discourse I took notice the reference here is to the original institution of the sabbath; especially as it is introduced with the word "Remember." I would now observe, that this is one of the ten commandments; all the rest of which are allowed to be of a moral nature, of universal and perpetual obligation. This, as well as the rest, was spoken by the voice of God at mount Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning, fire and smoke. Some indeed have supposed (in order to obviate this argument) that God intended to have spoken all the other laws, even the ceremonial ones, in the same manner, had not the Israelites been terrified and unable to bear it. But God knew that would be the case; and therefore he seems to me to have intended only to have spoken these ten commandments, as being of the greatest importance; as he would have them by this circumstance impressed and perpetually fixed on their memories, and engage the peculiar regard of their posterity to them. This is confirmed by recollecting that this command, with the rest of the ten, was written on tables of stone, by the hand of God himself; to signify the perpetuity of the commands; and further, it was ordered that these tables should be kept in the ark, over which God dwelt in a cloud of glory; so that they were put, as it were, under his eye and care, and were the fundamental laws of his government of Israel. Now these circumstances have particular weight in the present case, and show that these commands deserve peculiar and distinguishing regard. Observe further, the sabbath is represented as

* Grove's Ethics, vol. ii. part ii. chap. 4, § 4.

a sign between God and them for ever, "a perpetual covenant."* By observing it, they were to testify their belief in God, as the creator of all things; to profess themselves his worshippers and servants, and distinguish themselves from atheists and idolaters. So that the end for which it was enacted is evidently moral. Let it be further observed, that Moses was always concerned to secure the sanctification of this day; and he urgeth it by frequent commands and various motives. When he is giving the Israelites directions about the feasts of the Lord, and the manner in which they should be kept, he begins with the sabbath, as the chief, most ancient, and important.† But it is still more to our purpose to observe, that the later prophets, who were the great reformers of Israel, the guardians and restorers of the moral law, as the priests were chiefly of the ceremonial, strenuously inveigh against the profanation and abuse of the sabbath, just as they do against other immoralities; while they comparatively speak slightingly of all ceremonial observances. They put the profanation of the sabbath upon a level with idolatry, adultery, swearing, and murder; as appears by a multitude of passages in their books, particularly those of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos; passages which it would be too long to quote. Thus they intimate, that the observation of the sabbath has something more than ceremonial in it. I think also there is considerable weight in what a good writer‡ upon this subject hath urged, from James ii. 10. There the apostle says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law of God, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law." The apostle's instancing in two of the ten commandments, plainly shows, that "the whole law" of which he spake, is the ten commandments. And for the same reason as he mentioned the sixth and seventh, he might have mentioned the third and fourth, and have said, If a man commit no murder nor adultery, yet swears profanely or breaks God's sabbath, he is guilty of all. The authority of the lawgiver is despised, and the law loses its credit, by men's violating it in one point. Therefore God must be displeased, and the threatenings of the law deserved, by a wilful transgression of the fourth as well as the sixth or seventh. Upon the whole, though it should be pleaded that the precise time, or one day in seven, is not of universal and perpetual obligation; yet the setting apart some stated time for God's worship is undoubtedly so; and setting apart one day in seven, as appointed by the example and authority of God, particularly in the fourth commandment, is of perpetual obligation to all those who believe the divine authority of the bible. Thus much then of the law of the fourth commandment is still in force, and the reason and

* Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. † Lev. xxiii. 3. ‡ Dr. Wright.

obligation perpetually binding. This is the sentiment of the Church of England; and therefore, after the fourth commandment is read, the people answer, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." But the evidence of this will further appear under the next head; namely,

7. Christ and his apostles have directed and encouraged the separating the first day of the week for religious purposes. Some of the prophets foretold that, under the Christian dispensation, weekly days of public worship should be continued. Thus, after Isaiah had described the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, and declared that God's salvation was near to come, he saith, "Blessed is the man who keepeth the sabbath from polluting it."* And more expressly, speaking of the latter day, when Jews and gentiles shall be united, he saith, "From one sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship before me."† Also in that obscure vision of Ezekiel, concerning a glorious temple, which is generally thought to refer to the gospel, he speaks of the gate of the temple being "shut on the six working days, but on the sabbath and the new moon it shall be opened," that is, on the days of solemn worship, which, as in the rest of the vision, is described in figures taken from the Jewish ritual. But not to lay much stress on these passages, it is very evident that Christ and his apostles declared that the Jewish sabbath, as it was kept on the seventh day and by the particular rites and rest required in the law, was to be abolished; and yet that they put honour upon the first day of the week. The former is evident from all those passages that speak of the abolition of the Mosaic law; especially, "Let no man judge you in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come."‡ Now if we have no Christian sabbath, we have not the substance of those good things which the Jewish sabbaths were the shadow of. It is plain our Lord arose from the dead on the first day of the week, the day after the Jewish sabbath. On that day, and again on that day se'nnight, he appeared to his disciples, when they were assembled together, that is, for religious worship.§ Then he blessed them, instructed them, breathed on them, and gave them sensible proofs of his resurrection. Now there appears to be no reason why the particular day of these several appearances of Christ should be specified, except it was to point out the Christian sabbath on the first day, and that they were then met for divine worship. At pentecost, which was then the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, furnished them with extraordinary gifts and powers, and gave them amazing success in preaching the gospel.‖ It appears to have been the practice of the apostles and first Christians to meet on

* Isa. lvi. 2. † Isa. lxvi. 23. ‡ Col. ii. 16.
§ John xx. 1, 19, 26; Mark xvi. 1, 2, 9. ‖ Acts ii. 1; Whitby in loc.

that day for religious worship. "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," that is, to receive the Lord's supper, "Paul preached to them."* They did not appoint a meeting, because Paul was there; but he took the opportunity of their usual meeting on that day to preach to them. Hence it appears to have been their common custom; a custom peculiar to them as Christians, and derived from him from whom they derived Christianity itself. When St. Paul directs the Corinthians to make "a collection for the saints," he orders them to "lay by in store on the first day of the week;" and gave the same orders to the churches of the province of Galatia.† The reason evidently was, that they then met together for public worship, and then it was most convenient to put money into a common stock under the care of the deacons. Thus he declared his approbation of their practice, and confirmed the custom. It is further to be observed that St. John speaks of his being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."‡ This proves that there was one particular day of the week distinguished from the rest by that title; and that it was the first day is plain, because in the New Testament there is no other day specified for Christian worship; nor any other but the first day of the week styled the Lord's day, by any of the ancient Christian writers. It is so called in memory of Christ's resurrection on that day; and is a standing evidence of that fact, on which Christianity is founded. It may also be so called, because the Lord's supper was then administered; and also because it is to be spent in religious exercises, which more directly tend to the honour of Christ, than our worldly labours can do. Thus the Lord's supper is distinguished from our own supper, and so called because instituted by Christ. So we speak of the Lord's prayer, to distinguish it from other prayers. Therefore the expression of "the Lord's day" must signify a day chosen, instituted, and appointed by the Lord Jesus, to be employed in his service and to his honour. It is true, indeed, we do not read of the particular institution of this day. And the reason seems to be, the violent prejudice of the Jews in favour of their law, and the offence that any alteration in their holy time would have given them. But it is evident Christ hath instituted public worship, because he hath commanded the celebration of his supper, which is, by his and his apostles' rule, to be attended with prayer and praise. When then must this service be performed but on the Lord's day, to which it so well agrees? Besides, actions make a law where they sufficiently publish the will of the lawgiver, without words. The practice of the apostles, under divine inspiration, shows what was the will of Christ in this respect. And it is very probable among many things, which Christ taught and commanded his apostles, during his stay on earth, after his

* Acts xx. 7. † 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. ‡ Rev. i. 10.

resurrection, there were directions relating to this day and the manner of observing it; at least, that the Spirit, whose infallible conduct their Lord promised them, gave them such directions as were necessary upon this head. Their practice is a sufficient rule to us; and, compared with other particulars above mentioned, is a law to us, and an obligation upon us. I may add, that there might be no occasion for a new law upon this subject, if what some learned men have attempted to prove be true, that the first day of the week was the sabbath, till the law was given; that then it was altered to the seventh, to preserve the Jews from idolatry, as some of the heathen worshipped the sun on the first day of the week. And they observe, that as the first whole day that Adam lived was the sabbath, it seems natural, that he would call that the first day of his week. So that in that case, when the Jewish law was repealed, Christians would naturally return to the first day of the week. But this is very doubtful; and what we observed in the former discourse, concerning the ceasing of the manna on the seventh day, seems to prove the contrary. This however is evident, that our Lord had authority and power to fix upon any day of the week, which he thought proper for religious worship; since, as he himself informs us, "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."* It is an ordinance of his kingdom. He changed it to the first day of the week, to show his authority in his church and kingdom; and because he was to free his disciples from the yoke of the law, and the peculiar abstinences required on the Jewish sabbath. Their sabbaths had been appointed, among other weighty ends, to keep them a distinct people in their worship and rites; but that reason now ceased. Christ came to be the Saviour of all men, to proselyte all nations to his religion and admit them to its privileges. It was therefore proper there should be an alteration of the sacred day; and the heathen would be more likely to attend Christian worship on the first day, on which many of them rested from their labours and worshipped their gods, than on the sabbath of the Jews, as they had so great a contempt of that nation. To this I may add, that the precise day of the week was not (as was hinted above) of the essence of the sabbath in its primitive institution. The alteration of the time doth not repeal the law, nor alter its nature and obligation; any more than changing the rites and ceremonies of worship alters the nature and obligation of the second commandment. The general reason of the thing, and its original appointment, oblige all to observe a sabbath, and the authority of Christ confines it to the first day of the week. We observe one day in seven to commemorate the creation, and the first day of the week to commemorate Christ's resurrection; so that our Lord's day includes both the patriarchal and Jewish sabbath, as

* Matt. xx. 8.

far as they are binding, and also the Christian sabbath. Let us advance a step further, and observe,

8. The first day of the week hath been kept sacred by Christians in every succeeding age, even to this day. We have seen already what the practice of the apostles was. They sometimes, indeed, attended the Jews' synagogues on their sabbath days. But it was partly for the sake of meeting the Jews there and preaching to them. At the same time we know they observed the first day as a day of worship. They might at first attend the Jewish synagogues with a view to join in their worship; otherwise they must have neglected public worship, till they had converted a sufficient number in a place to form a Christian church. Many of the first Christians in Judea and other eastern nations observed both Saturday and the Lord's day, as days of worship, in compliance with the prejudices of the Jews, till their polity was destroyed, and they ceased from being a nation: just as the apostles observed some of the Jewish rites, which were chiefly, if not entirely, of a political nature, till that time. But the early Christian writers speak of the first day of the week as fixed and appointed by Christ himself. In their addresses and apologies to the heathen, they call it "Sunday;" that they might know what day they spoke of, because the first day was so styled by them, and dedicated to the sun, whom many of them worshipped, as Monday was to the moon, and so on. But they generally called it "the Lord's day," and never "the sabbath." Pliny, a heathen writer, tells us that the Christians met together on a stated day for worship. One of the early fathers saith, "Reason and custom require us to honour the Lord's day, and observe it as a festival." Another tells the heathen, "On the day called Sunday, all of us that live in cities or in the country meet together for worship." Tertullian tells us, "the heathen thought the Christians worshipped the sun, because they met together for religious service on the first day of the week." All the ancient writers speak of the Lord's day with the most honourable titles; as "the queen and empress of our days;" "the chief of our days:" public worship they call by the name of "Lord's day solemnities." They all harmoniously declare that they kept this day on account of Christ's resurrection; and many of the Christians in Europe fasted on Saturday, that they might not seem to observe any sabbath with the Jews. The primitive Christians were known among the heathen by this particular circumstance, the observing of the Lord's day. When the emperor Constantine the Great became a Christian, he enjoined the strict observance of the Lord's day; obliged his heathen soldiers to rest, retire into the fields, and pray to the true God; and he composed a form of prayer for their use. There were many good laws made by the succeeding Christian emperors, yea by our Saxon princes,

for the religious observation of the Lord's day; particularly by Ina and Alfred. And several councils held in this kingdom, about a thousand years ago, published some edicts to the same effect. And I need not set myself to prove that it hath been observed ever since. Hence it appears that the observation of the Lord's day is no novelty, started by any particular sect or party of Christians, but hath been the general sense of the whole Christian world, sadly divided as it hath been about almost every thing else. And surely apostolical practice, and the custom of the primitive Christians, and every succeeding generation of Christians, are a good direction to us, and confirm the evidence that this is indeed a duty, which our great Lord, sovereign, and master requires of us. I would observe once more,

9. The sanctification of the Lord's day is, upon the whole, of so great moment, that Christianity, both in profession and practice, will stand or fall with it. It is certainly well adapted to bring to our serious thoughts the wonders of creating wisdom, power, and goodness; to remind us of our redemption by Jesus Christ; to lead us to commemorate his resurrection, which confirmed the truth of his doctrine, declared him to be "the Son of God with power," testified that his sacrifice was accepted, and ensures the glorious resurrection of his faithful followers. It must, therefore, surely be of the greatest importance to observe it. Had this institution been entirely neglected, it is very evident Christianity would long ago have been lost in the world, without some miraculous interposition to secure its continuance. Sabbaths and sacraments keep up the knowledge of the grand leading facts of the gospel. They were peculiarly useful in this view, before printing was invented; when copies of the New Testament were extremely scarce and dear, and so very few could buy them; and before learning was so much cultivated, so that very few could read. Even to the present day, with all our glorious advantages, most of the knowledge of religion that many, yea it is to be feared that most, have, is owing to what they hear on the Lord's day. Were the observation of this day dropped but for one year, how would ignorance gain ground; to what a height would profaneness arise! It would be a more fatal blow to religion than all the weak attacks of infidels and free-thinkers. Not to mention its advantages as a day of rest for man and beast, let us remember, that the law of the sabbath is the hedge and fence of all the rest. If that be once broken down, an inundation of ignorance, superstition, and vice will break in upon us, and bear down every thing that is sacred and valuable. It is the great support of virtue, and guardian of its power. It keeps piety alive, and spreads the knowledge of natural and revealed religion. Were this day made common, and the reverence of it lost, or only

kept as a day of rest and idleness, men would employ it worse than other days, as they generally do holy-days of man's appointing. Sad experience shows how soon serious impressions are lost; how difficult the best of Christians find it to keep a sense of religion lively and vigorous, from one sabbath to another. Men have so little leisure on other days for turning their thoughts to serious subjects, that, if there were no such institution as this, or this was generally neglected, they would become as rude and savage as ever: piety would fly from us, and justice, fidelity, and sobriety would not stay long behind. History and experience show us, that where the sabbath hath been most seriously and religiously observed in churches or particular families, those that compose them have been most eminent for knowledge, piety, and every branch of goodness. Religion will never revive among us, till the sabbath is more regularly observed, and more religiously spent. This seems to have been the sentiment of all Christian lawgivers: therefore they have enacted the strict and religious observation of this day. Our own laws do this very remarkably; forbidding, under certain penalties, any secular work or labour, sport or diversion; and enjoining the duties of religion, both in public and in private. And therefore to neglect the observation of this day is disloyalty as well as impiety; and every good man ought to be subject to so reasonable a law, not for fear of the penalty, but for conscience sake. Besides, in the present circumstances of the Christian world, if men will not join in religious worship on this day, they are under a kind of necessity of neglecting it altogether; and thereby not only contradicting the rules of revelation, but the dictates of nature and reason, piety and benevolence.

To sum up the whole; each of these arguments seem to me very just and weighty, and have done so to many hundreds and thousands of ministers and private Christians, much wiser and better than I pretend to be; much more, when they are considered in their connexions, and it is carefully observed how they support and throw light upon one another. If any of you think there is any part of the argument fails, let me entreat you to consider, that if you can suppose the law of Christ doth not fix one day in seven, it is fit some proportion of time should be fixed; and what is more reasonable and fitting in itself, than to separate for religious purposes that proportion of time which the wisdom of God certainly separated, at the creation and under the Jewish dispensation? Suppose the proportion of time only a positive institution; yet it is evident concerning all positive institutions, that there must be some natural reason for appointing them, and that a Being of infinite wisdom discerns it, though we may not; because he hath required us to observe them. Accordingly, those divines who have denied the morality of the sabbath, as

enjoined in the fourth commandment, have yet insisted on the religious observation of the first day of the week. One day in seven hath been found by long experience to be attended with no inconvenience, upon the whole, to the natural rights and secular interests of men. And the proportion of time hath never, that I can find, been complained of. It is as little as can well be allotted for the rest of man and beast, and for the improvement of our minds and morals; and, therefore, on the principles of reason and piety, benevolence and humanity, yea, I may add, decency and good manners, it ought to be observed. I do not suppose, I cannot suppose, that you, my friends, needed all these arguments to convince you of our obligation to observe the Lord's day. But I was willing to strengthen your conviction of that obligation, and thereby better dispose you to attend to what, God willing, I may lay before you, concerning the proper manner of observing the day, and keeping it holy; and to follow those directions. I hope you will not think me uncharitable, if I conclude this discourse with saying, concerning the observation of the Lord's day, (as Mr. Baxter doth concerning family worship,) "If any yet object to the reasonableness and usefulness of it, one grain of true piety and the fear of God will do more to remove their objections than ten thousand arguments."

DISCOURSE III.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LORD'S DAY IS TO BE OBSERVED, PARTICULARLY AS A DAY OF REST, CONSIDERED.

ISAIAH LVIII. 13, 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.

IT was a favourite maxim among the Jews, that "the sabbath weigheth against all the other commandments;" because if the sabbath be duly observed, the rest of the commandments will be made known, the observation of them inculcated, and men will be disposed to obey them. From a persuasion, that there is a great deal of truth and importance in this maxim, and from a desire that you may be complete in all the will of God, I am handling the subject of the sanctification of the Lord's day. I proposed to consider,

I. The obligations Christians are under to observe and sanctify the Lord's day.

II. To show you the manner in which it is to be observed and kept holy.

III. To urge some arguments and motives to engage you to keep it holy; and then consider what inferences the subject furnisheth us with.

I have already considered the obligations we Christians are under to observe and sanctify the Lord's day; and enlarged upon these propositions: that the public worship of God is an important and necessary duty; it is proper there should be stated times appointed for it, and an agreement between different societies to worship at the same time. At the creation of the world God appointed one day in seven to be separated for a religious use; when he gave the law to the Jewish nation, he expressly commanded the observation of a sabbath; this commandment is so placed and expressed in the law of Moses, as to show that it is worthy of peculiar and distinguished regard; Christ and his apostles directed and encouraged the separating the first day of the week for the service of God, and it is called the Lord's day in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ; it is evident that this day hath been observed as a day of rest and worship by Christians in every succeeding age; and the observation of it is of so much importance, that Christianity, both in profession and practice, will stand or fall with it. If you have, since my last discourse, complied with my desire, in seriously considering these propositions, and weighing the force of the arguments arising from them, you will, I am persuaded, be well disposed to attend to the second branch of my subject; where I am,

II. *To consider the manner in which the Lord's day is to be observed and kept holy.*

Our text gives us some excellent directions upon this head. We are to "turn away our foot from the sabbath," that is, from trampling upon it; from doing any thing that would look like putting contempt upon the day, or having mean thoughts of it. We are to have a high and honourable opinion of the sabbath, to "call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;" a day that God hath put honour upon, and that we are to esteem and treat as an honourable and delightful day. Upon this day, the text tells us, we are to "honour" God, by "not doing our own ways, finding our own pleasure, or speaking our own words;" and all this because it is God's "holy day." This thought, you see, is repeated; it is God's "holy day," and therefore ought to be sanctified. Considering these directions in connexion with the fourth commandment, with other rules relating to the means of religion, and with the nature of things, we shall soon see in what manner the sabbath is to be observed and kept holy: namely,

1. By a rest from all worldly labours and employments; and,

2. By a holy diligence in the proper duties of the day.

These two must be taken together. The former, the rest of this day, is necessary for the latter; that is, the proper duties of it. We cannot be fit for religious exercises without ceasing from labour; and resting from labour can never be called sanctifying or keeping holy a day, without spiritual exercises. Let us then attend to each of these in their connexion. The Lord's day is to be observed and kept holy,

1. By a rest from all our common labours and employments. This must comprehend a rest from the business of our callings, and from all amusements and recreations; but works of necessity and mercy are allowable. As this is an affair of very great moment, you must give me leave distinctly to consider each of these, and show the reasonableness and importance of keeping this law. We are to rest,

(1.) From the business of our callings and daily occupations. Thus the fourth commandment runs; "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." And observe how positively this is forbidden. Thou shalt not do it "thyself, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle." In like manner the text tells us we are not to "do our own ways." When it is said, in the fourth commandment, "Thou shalt do no work," the word translated "work," is used in the Old Testament to signify a man's own proper business or calling, trade or occupation; that work which on other days he pursues for the support of himself and family, and the good of society. In like manner the other six days of the week are called by a remarkable name in the prophecy of Ezekiel, "the six working days."* Under the Jewish law, persons who violated the rest of the sabbath were to be put to death; as they were guilty of an affront to Jehovah, their king and God, a contempt of their great deliverance from Egypt, and presumptuously disobeyed a plain and express command. "Ye shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy to you; every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; whosoever doeth any work therein, shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."† Here work, in like manner, seems to refer to their common labours, and occupations. In that law there is an adjudged case relating to the breach of this precept. A man, who was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day, was, by the express command of God, stoned to death.‡ What we render "gathering of sticks," may be translated, and is by the Jewish doctors understood of "binding up sticks;" making them into faggots, either to use them in the

* Ezek. xlvi. 1. † Exod. xxxi. 14, 15. ‡ Numb. xv. 32.

way of his occupation, or pile them up for sale in the camp. Therefore, to prevent any from pursuing their trade or gain on the sabbath day, this man was made an example of, and put to a dreadful death. It was also enacted by that law, that they should rest on the seventh day in earing time, that is, the time of ploughing, and sowing, and in harvest;* and no uncertainty of weather, or hazard of their corn being damaged, should be allowed a reason for violating the sacred rest. There were some laws relating to the rest of the sabbath which have been thought to be peculiar to them; as, that they "should not go out of their places or tents on the sabbath day;" but it seems to be only a command not to go out of the camp; for we can never suppose they were forbidden to go and worship at the tabernacle, or join with their brethren and neighbours in religious exercises. They were likewise commanded not to kindle a fire in their dwellings; though it seems probable from the connexion, that this precept only refers to making a fire, in order to perform some work towards building the tabernacle.† The Jews had many traditionary laws and superstitious rites relating to the sabbath, on which they laid great stress. From these Christ hath set his disciples free, nor doth he enforce the rest of the Lord's day by so awful a penalty. The substance of all these commands, as far as they concern us, is this; Thou shalt not follow any trade, or worldly employment whatsoever; whether it be the labour of the body, hand, or head; working, writing, or contriving; which on other days is pursued for the sake of worldly enjoyments, and to provide for this life. As works of piety are the very business of the day, so all works tending thereto are perfectly consistent with the rest which God requires; such as travelling or walking to the place of public worship; clothing ourselves in a decent manner; taking such refreshment as is necessary to our health, and doing what is then needful for the health, comfort, and good order of our families. These things, if they take not up too much of our time and too great a share of our concern, are no transgression of the fourth commandment. But it must be carefully remembered that our trades and occupations are not to be followed on the Lord's day. All kinds of buying and selling, except in cases of necessity; employing others about our persons, as barbers, hair-dressers, and the like, are a direct violation of the original law of the sabbath, and of the fourth commandment. Nor is there any reason to except those occupations which consist in preparing materials even for food. Accordingly Nehemiah, like a wise and good magistrate, restrained and punished those, who sold victuals, wine, grapes, figs, and even fish, on the sabbath day. And he and the Jews entered into a solemn covenant, that if any of the people of the land were so ignorant and pro-

* Exod. xxxiv. 21. † Exod. xxxv. 3.

fane as to bring victuals to sell on the sabbath day, they would not buy it of them.* In like manner our own laws ordain that "no tradesman, artificer, workman, labourer, or other person whatsoever, shall exercise any worldly labour, business, or work of their ordinary calling, upon the Lord's day or any part thereof, under the penalty of five shillings. No butcher is allowed to sell meat; and no person whatsoever is to expose to sale any ware, merchandise, fruits, herbs, or goods whatsoever, on the sabbath day, or any part thereof, upon pain of forfeiting the same." And how any who profess themselves Christians and dutiful subjects can directly fly in the face of God and man by violating this law, it becomes them to consider. Further, all unnecessary journeying and travelling is forbidden on the Lord's day, and is unsuitable to the rest of it. In the fourth commandment it is expressly appointed that the cattle shall do no work. The rest is partly for their sake, for "God taketh care of" horses, and "oxen;" but chiefly for man, that his mind may not be taken off from better things. Some critics understand the expression in the text, "Turning away thy foot from the sabbath," of not travelling on that day. Using carriages and bearing of burdens are expressly forbidden; "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor carry forth a burden out of your house, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; but sanctify ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."† In like manner, our own law forbids persons to travel on their ordinary occupations on the Lord's day; and if they are then robbed, the hundred is not to be answerable for it. For any unnecessarily to take journeys on the day of God's rest, to use cattle and employ servants, to make innkeepers, their servants, or the servants of their friends whom they visit, live on that day as they do on others, is a manifest breach of the fourth commandment, and perverting the end of the sabbath. Men may pretend they travel only between times of public worship, and that they can employ their thoughts very profitably on the way; but is this consistent with the law that the cattle shall rest; that the servants shall rest? Can they undertake that their example will have no ill effect, and bring no discredit on the observation of that day? Our Lord saith, "He that shall break one of these least commandments" (and you will observe he is speaking of the law of Moses and the prophets) "and shall teach men so," that is, make others break them by what he doth, "he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."‡ And could the law of the sabbath be called one of the least? Was it so among the Jews? Is it so under the gospel? And yet men violate the Lord's day, to save a little money, time, or labour, or for more convenient despatch of worldly business. To be content to take

* Neh. xiii. 15, 16. x. 31. † Jer. xvii. 21. ‡ Matt. v. 19.

a sermon by the way, or be at church at such a place, and such an hour, will not be reckoned sufficient by a holy and jealous God. This is dividing the day between God and the world; but whether he that requires a whole day for his service will accept such a partnership, you would do well to consider. In short, this rest of the sabbath is of perpetual obligation; and every thing that keeps the body from worship, or unfits the mind for it; any unnecessary employment of servants and cattle; or such work or journeying as would be of ill example to others, ought most carefully to be avoided. We are to keep holy the Lord's day,

2. By a rest from all amusements and recreations. If we are to abstain from worldly business and secular labour, much more from diversions. Why are worldly employments forbidden, but because they hinder the holy employment of the soul? It is easier for a man to be serious and good, to have his mind filled with holy meditations, and enjoy communion with God, at his work than at his sports. And one of the fathers says, "It is better for the maids to be spinning and the men ploughing on the sabbath, than to dance, and sport, and idle away their time." God's design in separating and sanctifying the sabbath, is more perverted by diversions than by labour. The former estrange the heart more from God and divine things than the latter. Diversions are at all times hazardous, occasioning a dissipation of thought, endangering a mispense of precious time, and are apt to indispose the soul for religious exercises. But they are a most shameful mispense of sacred time, and a most horrid perversion of the design of the Lord's day. Our text expressly requires us to refrain from "doing our own pleasure" on God's holy day; and again, from "finding our own pleasure." Now this intimates that there are some pleasures properly our own, and which are lawful on other days, but not to be used on the sabbath. This therefore we are to attend to; and not put such contempt on the sabbath as to play at any game, follow any sport, or engage in any amusement. This is spending the sabbath as a day devoted to our lusts and to the devil, and not to God. In like manner, walking about in the streets or fields, merely for amusement, is evidently wrong, and a thing of very bad example. If it be absolutely necessary for health, it is proper always to walk alone; for though your conversation with one another may be religious, yet those that see you do not know that; and may be encouraged by your example to idle away sacred time. Frequenting coffee-houses, or other public houses, on the Lord's day, to read the news, appears to me inconsistent with the sacred regard due to the day. This leads to vain and trifling company and conversation. And to go from the house of God directly to such places, is a very unnatural transition; tends to drive out every serious im-

pression, to defeat the improvement you would otherwise receive, and to lead others, by your example, into sin and mischief. Besides this, the generality of men in trade have so little leisure on other days for improving their minds and morals, and instructing their families, that they ought not to trifle away the least part of the sabbath. For the same reason, I must admonish those of the other sex, and indeed all of you, against visiting on the Lord's day.' When I consider the general strain of conversation at visits, I cannot, with the utmost stretch of charity, suppose that your conversation at them on the Lord's day is always religious, always useful, or even always innocent. But supposing it were, your time might be as well employed at home. You are a hindrance to the family where you visit, and to their servants, whose time is employed in providing entertainment for you, and waiting upon you. Your own servants are neglected, who never need your watchful eye more than on the sabbath; and your example is likely to have a mischievous influence on your children, servants, and neighbours. The same reason which I mentioned above must be applied here; that by visiting after public service, instead of retiring for recollection, self-examination, and prayer, serious impressions are lost, and the devil steals away the good seed sown in your hearts. You may think it a piece of proper respect and politeness to receive your friends on that day; but the law of God makes no allowance of this kind; and whether it is fit to obey men or God, whether it will be worse to displease men, or to displease God, judge ye.* But I must above all condemn persons making, or going to, feasts and entertainments on that day; for nothing can be a more evident breach of the divine law than such a practice; particularly as to most of their servants it is neither a day of rest nor devotion. Under this head of recreation and amusement I must also range reading trifling books, and such as are no way adapted to improve the mind in religious knowledge and holiness; and I must particularly caution you all against idle, vain, impertinent discourse on that day; all unnecessary conversation about the common business, concerns, or occurrences of life; because this is unsuitable to the design of the day, and expressly forbidden in our text. And I beg you would carefully attend to this particular, because I greatly suspect that we all of us offend in this instance. The text requires us to refrain from "speaking our own words;" that is, such words as are proper, lawful, useful, at least innocent, on other days. This must evidently forbid all merry stories, jests,

* It is related concerning the pious James Bonnell, Esq., accountant-general of Ireland, that "the Lord's day evenings he chose to spend alone, or in such company where religion might be the only entertainment. But the rarity of such company made him at last resolve to visit none upon that day, but the sick or afflicted, and to decline receiving visits as much as possible; desiring to converse only with God and his own thoughts, till it was time to call his family together to social worship."

conversation about trade, politics, or even common occurrences; except it be to make religious reflections upon them, or draw moral instructions from them. The tongue is not to talk of worldly things, nor the mind to think of them, any more than the hands to labour about them. And it seems perfectly agreeable to reason that the general strain of our discourse on that day should be serious, pious, and instructive.* Considering the great variety of subjects of this nature, which the scriptures and the day itself suggest, it cannot be very difficult to persons who have any sense of religion, to find suitable materials for such conversation; especially after they have been at public worship, and heard so much of divine things. If any think that what is here required is impracticable, let them consider whether the gospel doth not require nearly as much as this from us every day. "Let your communication be that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers."† "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt."‡ "I say unto you," saith our Lord, "that every idle, unprofitable word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment."§

To sum up this particular: since it is a day intended to prepare men for their heavenly rest, it must appear to common reason exceedingly inconsistent and disagreeable, for any to give themselves to childish frolics and sensual entertainments, to play and sport, walking about, visiting or staring idly in the street, and to vain and impertinent conversation. The command of God seems plainly to forbid these indulgences; and it is a strong unanswerable reason against them, that the generality of men are necessarily employed so much about the world on common days, that they have very little time for religion; and therefore ought most solicitously to avoid every thing that would be a mispense of their sacred time. Our pleasures on the Lord's day ought to be spiritual, like those of the angels; and a pious man will never complain of the want of sports and recreations on that day, since the work of a sabbath is in itself the highest and noblest recreation to him. I have read of some persons who have used sports and pastime on the Lord's day, to prove they were no Jews; but such a conduct will equally prove that they are no Christians. It is certainly a mark of an impious, irreligious man, to make that a day to improve in vice and vanity which God hath appointed for our improvement in divine wisdom and solid goodness. I add once more,

(3.) That nevertheless works of necessity and mercy are allowable on this day. These cannot be superseded by any positive law; nor were they excluded amidst the rigours of the

* The reasonableness of having their discourse correspondent to the design and business of a festival, appeared to the heathen: see the beginning of the next sermon.

† Eph. iv. 29. ‡ Col. iv. 6. § Matt. xii. 36, 37.

Jewish law. Our Lord teacheth us that it is lawful and necessary to take care of the brute creatures. From his principles and arguments, as well as the evident reason of things, it is lawful and proper to dress and feed ourselves, to relieve the distressed, to nurse the sick, and take care of young children. It is lawful for physicians and apothecaries to visit the sick on the Lord's day. But then wisdom and piety will require, that, if possible, they contrive their visits so that they may have time to join in public worship. And care should be taken by them, that their visits on that day be acts of religion and charity, and not made merely as the common labour of their calling and to get money. There have been several instances of pious physicians, who, sensible of this, have devoted all the fees they received on the Lord's day to charitable uses. Ministers and Christian friends may then visit the sick, to advise and comfort them, and pray with them; yet I cannot but think it will be prudent generally to avoid this, except in cases of dangerous sickness; because their example may be mischievous, and that of ministers more than of others. Persons who have the care of the sick or young children should perform their services for them "as to the Lord," and improve their time in reading, meditation, or pious discourse. If the labour of a few in a town, for one part of the Lord's day, in providing food for many other families (as bakers for instance) will allow many to go the worship of God, I cannot see any harm in it. I say *part* of the Lord's day, because every one that is able ought to attend public worship. But every conscientious person and family should contrive to have as little needful as may be, that they may apply themselves more closely to the one thing absolutely needful. In some particular cases, a journey on the Lord's day may be necessary; but such cases can very seldom happen; and a good man would look upon the circumstance, which rendered it necessary, as a painful one, rather than be glad of it as an excuse. To make a justifiable necessity, it must be something very important and considerable in itself, and urged by very great and good reasons. Because the reasons for resting on this day are very great and important, it is not a light matter that should over-rule them. It must also be a matter that could not be contrived before the sabbath, nor deferred till after it. And it must be something that would always have the same necessity; that is, if the same thing should fall out on another day, all other business must be forced to give way to it.* But to travel and visit friends, or pursue any amusements on that day merely because the law forbids us to work; or to neglect God's business on that day, rather than neglect our own on other days, which is the case of most that travel on the Lord's day—this, I say, is nothing less than impiety and disobedience, and a most evident

* Dr. Wright.

contempt of the divine law. Thus much for the rest of the day.

The reasonableness of this rest and abstinence from labour and amusement very plainly appears to every serious mind. The rest of cattle is necessary for their health and serviceableness; that of our servants for their health, comfort, and religious interests. Every indulgence that tends to prevent our attending upon public worship, and to defeat the design of it, must be contrary to reason and scripture. The mind of man is limited. It cannot attend to many things at once. And religion is of such vast and infinite importance, that nothing else that can be pursued or enjoyed deserves to be compared with it. Besides, our degenerate and treacherous hearts are too little disposed for divine things, and therefore every thing that would, in the least degree, interrupt their attention to them, should be carefully avoided.

Upon the whole, to conclude this discourse, it is impossible for any minister to lay the line in many cases, and say, This is lawful, and this is not. Every man must judge for himself; but then let him judge as in the sight of God, and as accountable to him. What hath been urged upon this subject will appear to many, in the present day, too scrupulous and precise, and laying too much stress on little things. But the question is, are these the commands of God, or not? I wish those who plead for or allow themselves in the fashionable relaxation from the strict sanctification of the sabbath, would seriously consider, not what is the custom of the age, but what is right, what God requireth, and what will conduce to the interest of true religion. I much wish that they would particularly examine and observe whether the morals of men are mended, since public worship was more neglected, and the sabbath less strictly sanctified, than formerly. I entreat them to remember these important maxims; that it is our duty to "abstain from the appearance of evil;" that it is good to keep on the safe side; that he hath light notions of sin, and very unworthy apprehensions of the nature and of the law of God, who will venture to go to the utmost bounds of things lawful. Let it be further remembered, that they who do all that is lawful sometimes do more; and that happy is the man who hath a tender heart, and "feareth always." If any should, after all, be displeased that I have thus publicly protested against their usual practices, my apology they will learn from the following story. That eminent divine, Mr. Dod, having preached against the profanation of the sabbath, which much prevailed in his parish, and especially among the heads of it, the servant of a nobleman, who was one of them, came to him, and said, "Sir, you have offended my lord to-day." Mr. Dod replied, "I should not have offended your lord, except he had been conscious to himself that he had first offended my Lord, and if *your* lord will offend *my* Lord, let him be offended."

DISCOURSE IV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LORD'S DAY IS TO BE KEPT HOLY, CONSIDERED.

ISAIAH LVIII. 13, 14.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.

IT was a law among the ancient Athenians, that during the celebration of their sacred feasts no person should do any common business or talk of any common concerns; but their whole time, conversation, and labour should be employed about those things that related to the feast. So reasonable did it appear to these heathen to forbid every thing that would tend to divert their thoughts from the sacred solemnities they were celebrating. Such a wise and pious conduct on our solemn seasons the word of God demands from us, particularly in our text. In discoursing upon the sanctification of the Lord's day, we have considered our obligations to observe and keep it holy. We proceeded, in our last discourse on this subject, to show in what manner it is to be kept holy; and I observed that it is by a rest from all worldly labour and employment, more particularly from the business of our callings, from all our usual labours, from all travelling, buying, selling, and the like. We are likewise to rest from all amusements and recreations; from finding our own pleasures; from all sports and diversions, frequenting public places, visiting, impertinent conversation, and every thing that is a mispense of sacred time. Cases of great and urgent necessity are to be excepted. I proceed now to the other branch of sabbath sanctification; the Lord's day is to be sanctified,

2. By a holy diligence in the proper duties of the day. When God instituted the sabbath at first, it is said, "he hallowed" or sanctified it; that is, he set it apart for religious uses and purposes. He separated it from a common to a holy use; distinguished it from other days, as in a special manner his own. He not only rested on this day, but sanctified it; so that it is to be observed by us, not merely by resting from our labours and recreations, but devoting it to religious business, and employing it in a pious manner. The rest of the day is to be subservient to the service and worship of God, and our improvement in a religious temper. The text requires us on this day to honour God, by "not doing our own ways, finding our own pleasure, or speaking our own words." This plainly intimates, that on God's holy day we are

to do his ways; seek such pleasure, and such only, as may properly be called divine; and speak such words as are suited to the holiness of the day, as more immediately tend to the honour of God and the edification of ourselves and others. From hence it plainly appears that the Lord's day is not to be made a day of idleness. The rest of the day is the least part of the observation of it. To spend the sabbath in laziness and the indulgence of the flesh is so far from answering the end of it, that it is rather turning it into a mischief. Were this all that is necessary, the beasts keep the sabbath as well as men; and how was "the sabbath made for man," as our Lord saith, more than for beasts? Bishop Andrews observes, that "to keep the sabbath in an idle manner, is the sabbath of oxen and asses; to keep it in a jovial manner, to see plays and sights, to be at cards and entertainments, is the sabbath of the golden calf; but to keep it in surfeiting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, this is the sabbath of Satan, the devil's holy-day." Man, for whom the sabbath was made, is both body and soul. And is the soul to be neglected? We are to consider ourselves as something else besides flesh and blood, and consult the interest of our better and immortal part. We are allowed, yea commanded, on six days to do our own work; a plain intimation that on the seventh we are to do God's work. On that day you are more immediately to consider yourselves as God's servants. As you expect your servants should, on every other day of the week, work a whole day for you, so God expects that you work a whole day for him. And if this day be not entirely devoted to religious purposes, as far as necessity will admit, you spend it as your own day, not as the Lord's. Whatever is subservient to the great design of its separation, is to be pursued. There must be in our conduct a perfect harmony with the design of the day. It is necessary that on this day we assemble for the public worship of God. Accordingly, in the law of Moses it was ordained that the sabbath should be "a holy convocation,"* a day when the people were called together for worship. There were also peculiar sacrifices appointed for this day, additional to those that were daily offered. The ninety-second psalm is entitled "a psalm or song for the sabbath day;" which intimates that praise is to be a part of the business of this day. The temple where they assembled on that day was called God's "house of prayer;" intimating that prayer was the chief part of their business, when they came up thither on the sabbath day. The law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were then read in the Jewish synagogues. Our blessed Lord, "as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day," and read and expounded the scripture; and we have already observed, that the primitive Christians always gathered together

* Lev. xxiii. 2.

for worship on that day; prayers and praises were offered up, the scriptures were read, exhortations given, baptism and the Lord's supper administered; and some of them write, that besides this they observed the sabbath by private exercises of religion, by entertaining good thoughts, and casting out evil ones, and the like. And it must be carefully observed, that the sanctification of the sabbath doth not consist merely in resting from labour and amusement, and attending public worship; but as much of it as possible, before and after the time of public worship, is to be spent in religious exercises of one kind or another; in reading, meditation, prayer, praise, and religious discourse; impressing on our own souls, and the souls of those committed to our care, a sense of the divine perfection displayed in the creation and government of the world, and in the scheme of our redemption by Jesus Christ. These private exercises of religion are in effect enjoined in the text; they appear founded on the reason of things, and the general design of this day's being sanctified; they were the practice of the apostles and the first Christians; and our own law requires that "every person whatsoever shall, on every Lord's day, apply themselves to the observation of the same, by exercising themselves thereon, in the duties of piety and true religion, publicly and privately." We are to do nothing on that day but what is properly religious itself; or what is helpful to religion; or at least, when cases of necessity occur, what is no way injurious to it. No intervals or parentheses should be allowed between one religious exercise and another, but what may fit us to return to our duty with greater vigour and delight. It must therefore be a great mistake for any to imagine that the observation of the sabbath consists merely in attending public worship, and that when the season of that is over, they may return to their labours and amusements. This would be greatly defeating the design of the institution, and undoing every thing that public worship is calculated to do. In that case, men would come to the house of God immediately from their cares, or their pleasures, with all the hurries of the world about them; and go immediately and engage in them again, without giving themselves time to consider what they were going about, or to recollect what they had been hearing and doing; in consequence of which they would be very little better for devotion and instruction. The best of Christians find it difficult to get their hearts disengaged from the world, to raise them to a spiritual frame, and keep them in it; and the difficulty would be increased, if they were to rush immediately from public devotion to their business or their pastime. The practice of some foreign protestants hath been objected to this. It is well known to be customary among them to return to their amusements after public worship on the Lord's day evening; but then it is to be remembered that they begin their day, as the Jews

did, in the evening; their sabbath, beginning on Saturday evening, is finished on Lord's day evening; so that they keep a day of twenty-four hours; and during that time such indulgences are forbidden. But whatever their practice is, it is no further to be imitated by us than as it is good in itself and agreeable to the rules of scripture.

Having thus considered, in general, the manner in which the Lord's day is to be spent, and the holy duties in which we are to be engaged, I shall employ the rest of this discourse in giving a few plain directions for the religious observation and improvement of it; which, if I can engage you, through divine assistance, to reduce into practice, your own happy experience of the advantage of so spending the day will render any arguments to excite you to it in a great measure unnecessary. The directions are these; each of which I shall, in a few words, illustrate and recommend.

(1.) Endeavour to have finished all worldly business as soon as possible, on Saturday evening. When Moses is urging the Israelites to prepare their manna on the day before the sabbath, he saith, "To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord."* This we should recollect every Saturday evening, and endeavour to have worldly concerns off our hands and out of our thoughts as soon as possible. The practice of too many tradesmen in putting off some part of their work, particularly paying their workmen, till late on Saturday evening, and, for want of a little resolution and contrivance, sitting up later than on other days, is a very evil custom, and pernicious to the interest of godliness; and those pious persons, who cannot avoid this inconvenience, are much to be pitied. It is observed, in the life of that eminent Christian, James Bonnell, Esq., that "it troubled him, that he was often forced to be at his office upon Saturdays, because it hindered his preparation for the Lord's day, and might have an evil effect upon his servants; "for though," saith he, "I steal minutes at my office, they are not enough to satisfy myself, much less to give good example to others." It is a great inconvenience in many towns to have their market on Saturday; it is a great hindrance to the rest and regular observation of the Lord's day. There was a very good law made by Edgar, one of our Saxon kings, about eight hundred years ago, "that the sabbath should be celebrated from nine o'clock on Saturday evening till Monday morning." I wish this law was still in force.† Some time before the commencement of the sabbath, the Jews used to blow a trumpet in all their towns and districts, to give

* Exod. xvi. 23.

† There is a laudable custom in Shrewsbury, that every Saturday evening a bell is rung, at nine in the summer and eight in the winter, in the parish where the Butchers'-row is; during which the butchers are all obliged, under a considerable penalty, to shut their shops and sell no more meat.

persons notice of its approach, that they might lay aside their labours and prepare for the work of it. Let all persons, especially those in trade, by prudent forecast and a determinate resolution, endeavour to contrive their affairs so that they may get out of the hurry of the world as soon as possible before the sabbath; and labour to bring their minds into a proper frame for its work, and to have views and designs suitable to the weighty employment before them.

(2.) Let the Lord's day morning be redeemed from unnecessary sleep and introduced with pious ejaculations. It must certainly be condemned, as a violation and perversion of the sabbath, to make that day generally shorter than others, either by unnecessary sleep in the morning or retiring to rest earlier in the evening. Men rise up early and sit up late on other days, to pursue their own work, but show not half so much diligence and resolution when God's work demands their attendance. Let me exhort you, my brethren, to determine, with the pious psalmist, "I myself will awake early." You will find this necessary, in order more effectually to drive the world out of your thoughts and fix them on the things of God. As soon as you awake to behold the light of the sabbath, welcome its return, and bless God for it, for the institution of sabbaths in general, and for sparing you to enjoy another. Think what a day of mercy you awake to; what privileges and opportunities you have before you; what the damned would give for one sabbath as a day of trial. When you are rising, think of Christ rising from the dead, and what a blessing this was to the world. When you are dressing yourselves, think of putting on the Lord Jesus, and pray to be clothed with his temper, spirit, and righteousness. When you are washing, think of the purity which the gospel requires, and say with the psalmist, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and so compass thine altar, O Lord." From such hints as these, you may learn to make a religious use of the common actions of the day; and having seasoned your minds with such thoughts in the morning, you will be better disposed for the work and improvement of the whole day.

(3.) Let secret and family worship be performed with peculiar solemnity. It is necessary that prayer be every day sincere and serious, in order to its being acceptable to God, and comfortable and useful to yourselves. But as you will have more time on the Lord's day, set yourselves to read the scripture; especially the more devotional psalms, the histories of Christ, and such other passages as are likely to raise your devotion, and improve the pious frame of your spirits. Meditate on what you have read, and be early on your knees, to warm your hearts with sacred devotion. Adore God for all the wonders of creation, providence, and grace. Lament and be humbled for your many lost sabbaths, and the little improvement you have made

of many which have not been quite lost. Entreat his assistance and blessing in the duties of the day; that no unbelief, prejudice, levity, or distraction of mind may prevent your hearty concurrence in them and profit by them. Let your families see, by your prayers, how highly you value the sabbath, how greatly you delight in it, how solicitous you are that it may be a blessed day to you and to them. In your secret and family worship express before God your earnest desire of the spread of the gospel and the advancement of religion. And I entreat that you would never be unmindful to pray for Christ's ministers, especially for your own. Never fail affectionately to recommend them to the assistance of God's Spirit, and their labours to the influences of his grace; for their sake, for your own, and for the sake of your fellow-Christians. We should pray and preach better, and labour more successfully, if you, brethren, would pray more earnestly for us.

(4.) Let public ordinances be accompanied with serious preparation, attention, and recollection. "He that would profitably worship the gods," saith a heathen philosopher, "must not worship them by the bye, but with previous thought." The reverence due to sacred things requires that serious consideration and prayer precede your engaging in them. Thus the thoughts, too much bent upon the world, may be taken off from it, and the heart engaged to approach unto God. Let me caution you "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together." Let no slight excuse or infirmity keep you from the house of God. I have known several infirm Christians, who have acknowledged that public worship hath been their best cordial; and I know, by long experience, that an excessive fear and caution on this head increases the infirmities of the body and the disinclination of the heart. There is reason to fear that God may turn some persons' sins into their punishment; and make those disorders real and great, which kept them from the house of God, when they were only fancied or small. "For this cause," saith the apostle, namely, not paying a reverent regard to divine institutions, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."* When you are in God's house, be all attention to what is said, and "worship him in spirit and truth." Let no indecencies of behaviour, no sleeping, no gazing about, no idle postures, be ever seen among you. Watch against being absent in spirit, against all vain and trifling thoughts; for you had better trifle any where than in the house of God, and about the affairs of eternity. After worship retire for serious recollection. "Without this," saith Bishop Hopkins, "to hear the word of God only, is to swallow our food without chewing it; it is meditation that digests it, and makes it fit for nourishment."

* 1 Cor. xi. 30.

If you do not fix the word in your minds by meditation and prayer, the devil, as our Lord observes, will "steal it away."

(5.) Let necessary refreshments be used with moderation and devotion. To contrive to have more or better food on that day than on others is certainly wrong; not only because it is an injury to servants, keeping them from the worship of God, or taking up more of their time than is needful, but because it renders persons in peculiar danger of excess, and thereby they are exposed to drowsiness; the faculties of the mind are overcharged and unfitted for religious exercises. A caution on this head is very necessary, that you may be in the fittest frame for holy duties. Making feasts and entertainments on that day is (as I have already hinted) evidently wrong; it is "doing our own work and finding our own pleasure." But refreshing the bowels of the poor is highly becoming, and at once an act of piety and hospitality. Take peculiar care on that day, "whether you eat or drink, to do all to the glory of God." Let your common actions be sanctified and turned into religious ones, by being attended with pious thoughts, accompanied with edifying discourse, and thus be done after a godly sort. Let your conversation at your meals, during the intervals of public worship, and after it, be suited to the design of the day. Let what you have been hearing be the subject of discourse with your families and friends. Let your speech, especially then, be with grace. Labour to communicate holy thoughts and affections to others, and to edify each others' souls. Remember that you are no more to speak your own words than to do your own work, or find your own pleasure. I add,

6. Let your families be carefully instructed on that day. You are not only to pray with them on that day as well as on others, but to instruct them in the things of God. Teach your children their catechism, and endeavour that they understand what they learn. Talk plainly and familiarly to them concerning the things of God and the matters of religion. Inquire what they remember of the sermons they have heard, and what remarks they make upon them. Remind them of what hath been said in public, especially of what peculiarly suited their age and circumstances; remind them also of their baptismal engagements. Sometimes take each of them alone, admonish them and pray with them; and let them learn from thence, as it is the most striking way of teaching, how deeply and how tenderly you are concerned for their interest. Let your servants also share in your pious and friendly care, as in all reason they ought. It is, I think, much to the detriment of Christian families, that the custom of our fathers, in taking down some hints of sermons, and repeating them before their families on the Lord's day evening, is almost lost among us. To make up this defect, and answer the end of family instruction, read to

them, every Lord's day evening, some plain, practical, affectionate sermon or exposition; and if you perceive them careless and inattentive, reprove them, and inquire what they retain of that which they have heard and read. See that they be furnished with bibles, and some serious practical books besides; and exhort, command, and encourage them to read them. Show them the necessity and usefulness of secret prayer, and recommend it strenuously to them. Let all this be done, not in an authoritative manner, but with all meekness and gentleness of temper; so that it may plainly appear to proceed from a real concern for their spiritual good. Thus with Abraham, "command your children and household to learn the will and keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment."

7. Let something be laid by for the poor on that day. St. Paul gives this direction to the churches of Galatia and Corinth, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."* Not that men are then to settle their accounts, or examine the state of their affairs; but that having been done on some working day, or a general view of their trade and income having been taken on the Saturday, let a fixed proportion of it be laid by on the Lord's day for charitable uses. It seems that, at that time, this money was delivered to the deacons, to be added to the common stock of the church. But we may, in effect, observe this direction, in the method just proposed, on those Lord's days, when there is no public collection for the poor in our assemblies. Works of mercy are proper duties of the day: and as it is kept in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, which is the foundation of our hope, and as it is the day on which we receive spiritual blessings from him, these are special motives to enlarge our charity. We should then lay by as God hath prospered us, with a solemn act of thanksgiving to him for his blessing upon our labours, and earnest desires of his graciously accepting what we devote to his honour and service through Christ. Another direction is,

8. Let the day be concluded with self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Retire in the evening and take a serious review of the work of the day. Consider with what dispositions you arose; how you performed secret and family worship; how you behaved in the house of God; what instructions you received; and how your hearts were affected under ordinances. Read over the scriptures read, expounded, and preached upon; endeavour to recollect as much as you can of what was said for their illustration and improvement. In your secret devotion renew your thanks to God for the mercies and privileges of the day; be humbled for every thing in your temper and behaviour unsuitable to the design and work of it. Endeavour to fix what

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

you have heard upon your hearts, by humble confession and fervent prayer and praise. It is then a proper time to form good purposes and resolutions for the following week; to consider what temptations you may be particularly exposed to, and how you may best guard against them, or be enabled to overcome them. Consider what duties you may be called out to practise; what difficulties you may have to struggle with; and endeavour, by meditation and prayer, to have your minds well furnished, that you may be carried through them all. Bishop Burnet observes, that "the people ought to be often put in mind of the true end of the rest of the Lord's day, which is chiefly to give them time and opportunity for meditations and reflections on themselves, on what they have said or done, and on what has befallen them, the former week; and to consider what may be before them in the week they are entering on."* Lie down upon your beds with serious thoughts of God and of eternity, and longing for that eternal sabbath which needs no rest and admits no period. I shall only add,

9. Let all be accompanied with believing regards to the Lord Jesus Christ, and with holy cheerfulness and delight. One general rule for our conduct as Christians is, "Whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." There is peculiar reason to observe this rule on the Lord's day, because it is the Lord Christ's day. I wish its old heathen name of "Sunday" was quite forgotten among us; that its proper name might lead us to recollect whose day it is, and to whose honour it is to be employed. Let us have an eye to him in all the duties of the day; fix our humble dependence upon him for the assistance of his Spirit, and look for the acceptance of all our services through his merits and mediation. And let it be accompanied with holy cheerfulness and delight. Let us keep the Lord's feasts with joy and gladness. Let us dread the character of those who "snuff at God's service and say, What a weariness is it?"—of those who are described as saying, "When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell wheat?" Let us, as the text exhorts, "call the sabbath a delight;" not only account it so, but call it so; express our satisfaction and pleasure in it before others, and bear testimony to its usefulness and its comfort. Let us guard against a servile frame of spirit, and performing the duties of religion with dread or with reluctance. The primitive Christians rightly considered themselves as obliged to celebrate this day with joy; they counted it utterly unlawful to fast upon it, and endeavoured to avoid all occasions and expressions of sorrow and sadness. As it is "the day the Lord hath made," the day when we commemorate the most inestimable blessings, we ought to "rejoice and be glad in it;" to endeavour to banish every thing gloomy from our

* Burnet's Conclusion of his History, vol. vi. p. 1279.

countenances and minds, and earnestly pray that God would enable us to take delight in it, and give us a stronger relish for its noble and sublime pleasures. Singing the praises of God in our families, as well as the public assembly, is peculiarly proper and becoming on that day. Let me just add, that as it is a day of rest, of religious pleasure and holy joy, great care ought to be taken by ministers, parents, and other instructors, that the services of it are not made tedious and burdensome. I conclude in the words of good Mr. Baxter, "I appeal to reason, conscience, and experience, whether such a spending the Lord's day be not more suitable to the principal ends and hopes of a Christian than idleness, cards, dancing, alehouse haunting, or any worldly business or discourse; whether it would not be exceedingly conducive to the increase of knowledge, holiness, and honesty; and whether (when time is past and gone) you had not rather look back on Lord's days thus spent, than as idle, ungodly, carnal men, spend, consume, and murder them."

DISCOURSE V.

MOTIVES TO THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

ISAIAH LVI. 2.

Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it.

"LET any man," saith a judicious writer, "show me in the law of the sabbath either weakness or unprofitableness, and I yield and bid it vanish. But it hath, and will have, as much strength and force as any law can have, from the author, the consent, multitude, custom, and express approbation of all ages. Profit it hath too, and that very great; as hath been experienced by serious, well-disposed minds in every age of the world. It is of importance not only to the well-being of a Christian, but even to the very being and keeping up of religion in the world." I would now, therefore, follow what hath been said of the manner of keeping the sabbath, with an attempt to engage you to keep it so. And surely such an attempt deserves to be pursued and regarded; since the text tells us that "the man who doeth this," that is, this which follows, namely, "keeps the sabbath from polluting it;" "the son of man," whoever he be, "that layeth hold on it;" that is, acts with steadiness and resolution, holds fast the observation of the sabbath, and will not be laughed out of it, or, on any consideration, give it up; this man is a "blessed" man. He is happy in himself, and shall be blessed of God. It must be remembered that the text is part of an illustrious prophecy of gospel times and blessings. In the preceding verse

God saith, "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" which refers to the gospel dispensation, called "the salvation of God;" and in which, as the apostle observes, "the righteousness of God is revealed." So that the text evidently relates to the Lord's day, or the Christian sabbath, and pronounces a blessing on the man who observes it. I have largely shown you,

I. The obligations we are under to sanctify the Lord's day.

II. The manner in which it is to be sanctified; by ceasing from all our common labours, employments, amusements, and recreations; and by spending the whole day in religious exercises, either public or private, as far as works of necessity and charity will allow. I proceed now to the third branch of the subject, which is to suggest,

III. *Some arguments and motives to engage you to keep it holy.*

The observation of the Lord's day is not merely enjoined by divine authority, but founded on the best reasons, and attended with the noblest advantages. Here I would urge upon you these arguments and motives; that the religious observation of the Lord's day will make it a most delightful and edifying day to our souls; it will bring a blessing on the other days of the week; it will promote the prosperity of our country; it will tend to the honour of God and the Redeemer; it will help to maintain and advance religion in the world; and will fit us for an eternal sabbath. Let me entreat you to consider, and oh that you may feel the force of each of these motives!*

* When this discourse is read by protestant dissenters, I would urge upon them an argument well adapted to influence persons of that persuasion; namely that the religious observation of the Lord's day was the practice of their pious ancestors. The Puritans and protestant dissenters, in former ages, were always distinguished from the bulk of the nation by observing the Lord's day with greater strictness. "It hath been," as Dr. Watts observes, "a distinction of considerable standing; and that not in a town or two, but generally throughout the nation. And though there have always been some members of the national church who have paid a most religious regard to the Lord's day, yet I fear they have been comparatively few; while this has been the general character of protestant dissenters. Formerly, if persons neglected to worship God publicly twice a day, except necessarily hindered; if they counted it of no importance how they spent their time afterwards; if they indulged themselves in unnecessary business and amusements; wasted the afternoon in prolonging their dinner with the pipe and the glass, or impertinent conversation, which the more serious employed in public worship, reading, or religious retirement; if they made the Lord's day evening a season of familiar visits, and spent another hour or two in trifling discourse, as now-a-days over a tea-table; if they made no account of any other part of the day, but what was actually spent in public devotion, but turned it into hours of diversion and entertainment; we have been wont generally to conclude, and with great reason too, surely these persons can never be dissenters, for their education never would have permitted them to pay so slight a regard to the Lord's day." Among them there was in general no visiting, travelling, or idle mispense of sacred time; had they been solicited to these things, their answer would have been, "God forbid!" and they would have rejected the proposal with indignation and abhorrence. An historian tells us, that during the time the Nonconformists were in power, "the Lord's day was observed with the greatest strictness; all public houses were shut up; there was no traveller on the road, or walker in the fields, except in cases of absolute necessity. Reading the scripture, repeating

One argument for the religious observation of the Lord's day is,

1. It will make it a most delightful and edifying day to our souls. So it is promised in that text which I was last discoursing from; if thou religiously observe the sabbath, "then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord;" enjoy the highest pleasure in communion with him, and a sense of his favour. It is further promised, a few verses after our text, to every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, "I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer, and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar." Sabbaths are dull and uncomfortable to many, because their hearts are not in them. They seek trifling conversation and amusements, because they have no relish for religious entertainment; whereas that relish and pleasure is to be contracted by use and habit. And were men to take pains with their own hearts, they would find satisfaction and pleasure in religious services, infinitely superior to what any thing else could afford. The exercises of prayer and praise are in themselves delightful to a good mind. Society increaseth the natural delights of life, and especially its religious ones. By the work of a sabbath, dead souls are, through a divine blessing, sometimes awakened and made alive, good resolutions and habits strengthened, the soul contracts a firmness which is not easily moved by temptation, it is filled with a sense of the divine presence, and its obedience is better secured at all times and places. Reviewing the truths we have

sermons, family prayer, and singing of psalms were so universal in the city of London, that you might walk the streets on the Lord's day evening without seeing an idle person, or hearing any thing but the voice of prayer and praise from churches and private houses."* It hath indeed been intimated by some historians that the religion of these times was all hypocrisy and dissimulation. The censure itself is ignorant and uncharitable. Hypocrisy and dissimulation there might be among them; but I should rejoice to see in our day such an appearance of religion. "Between 1640 and 1660, though on civil accounts there were great disorders, and the foundations were out of course, yet in the matters of God's worship things went well; there was a face of godliness upon the nation, though some made but a mask of it; and religion, at least in the profession of it, did prevail. This we know very well, let men say what they will of those times." Thus said Mr. Philip Henry, whose piety, integrity, and candour are well known. Even Bishop Burnet saith, "There had been a face of gravity and piety in the former administration. There was good justice done, and vice was suppressed and punished; so that we always reckon those eight years of usurpation a time of great peace and prosperity." Hist. vol. i. pp. 93, 181, 12mo. Let us rouse ourselves, my brethren, and never lose this honourable part of our character. Bishop Burnet observed many years ago, that "the dissenters had lost much of their former strictness, which kept up their interest and reputation." We, in the present day, have lost more of it; insomuch that we seem to deserve that smart reflection which Mr. Nelson once made upon some dissenters who came to see him, dressed out to the extremity of the fashion, "I see," saith he, "that, though you scruple conformity to the church, you do not scruple conformity to the world." Let protestant dissenters, and especially those who have been trained up by pious parents in a strict observation of the sabbath, in the language of the text, "lay hold on it" and never lose it. If they carried this matter in some things to an excess, we are running into the more dangerous extreme. Let us endeavour to retrieve and preserve this honourable distinction, and be in this respect followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

* Neal, vol. ii. p. 591.

heard in public; meditation upon them in our retirements; discourse upon them in our families, and converse about them between God and our own souls, this is the only sure way to render public worship effectual to fit us for heaven, and to answer the religious purposes of the Lord's day. For want of this it is that many tradesmen, and some of the learned professions too, who understand and can talk well of trade, politics, or common occurrences, know very little of religion and their bibles; and can scarce read any book upon moral and divine subjects, but they are out of their depth. God hath marked out the sabbath as a day on which religion is to be studied, the soul improved, the manners polished, the temper mended; and if we will so employ it, he hath marked it out as a day of conferring signal favours upon us; and he will bless those that sanctify it, by giving them further measures of knowledge and grace. Many, I may say all, good men have found it so; some of them have left their experience on record, for our admonition and encouragement. And I have known instances of some poor mechanics and labourers, who have had no other education but being taught to read, and little time for reading and reflection, but on the Lord's day; and yet, by a diligent improvement of that time, have been eminent for wisdom and piety, and understood more of religion and the scripture than most gentlemen, tradesmen, and, I fear I may add, some divines too. The Lord's day is the pleasantest day in the week to a spiritual mind; and, if properly kept, will greatly improve our religious attainments, character, and experience. Let me conclude this head with a remarkable passage out of the Koran, or bible of the Mahometans; their lawgiver thus directs; "When you are called to prayer, on the day of the assembly," or sabbath, which with them is every Friday, "hasten to the commemoration of God. The reward which is of God is better than any sport or merchandise, and God is the best provider."* This leads me to add,

2. It will bring a blessing on the other days of the week. As it will qualify us for the divine blessing, and put us in the way of it. This it will do, by promoting in our hearts the fear of God, and a constant sense of his presence. This will excite our diligence and prudence in the common labours of life, and preserve us from idleness, fraud, extravagance, and all those vices which prevent the success of men's labours, or, like a secret fire, consume all their increase. It will moderate that anxiety about the world, which hurts persons' health, distracts their thoughts, and makes them perpetually fretful and uneasy. Making such a pause in the business of life, and employing it religiously, will give conscience time to reflect and to speak. Our hearts will then smite us, if any thing hath been amiss in our conduct; and the still voice of reason and conscience will be heard, when the

* Sale's Koran, p. 451.

voice of the world and the din of pleasure are silent. Whereas those who profane the sabbath often contract habits of idleness. On that day they consume the gains of the week, injure their families, and grow less disposed for honest labour. The good impressions made upon the heart by the public and private exercises of religion on the Lord's day, form men to thoughtfulness, sobriety, and discretion; and so, by a natural consequence, favour their worldly prosperity. Besides this, we have reason to expect a peculiar blessing from God on the labours of the week, if we sanctify his day. So he promises; If thou sanctify the sabbath, "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father," that is, advance thee to a state of plenty, dignity, and security; "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."* Many good men have observed, that the more carefully and piously they have kept the sabbath, the more remarkably they have been assisted and prospered through the following week. This observation hath been made and recorded by such eminent names as Bishop Hall, and that celebrated judge, Sir Matthew Hale. The last, giving his children such directions for the observation of the sabbath as I laid before you in the last discourse, saith, "I have found by a strict and diligent observation, that a due regard to the duties of this day hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time; and the week, that hath been so begun, hath been blessed and prosperous to me. And on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful, and unhappy to my own secular employments. So that I could easily make an estimate of my success the week following, by the manner of my passing this day: and this (he adds) I do not write lightly and inconsiderately, but upon a long and sound observation and experience."† Another argument for the religious observation of the Lord's day is,

3. It will promote the prosperity of our country. I need not set myself to show that God's "anger is not turned away" from our country, "but his hand is stretched out still." And I am well persuaded, that one of the iniquities, for which he hath a controversy with us, and corrects us, is the profanation of his sacred day. This appears from scripture. The Jews were threatened and punished with national judgments for profaning the sabbath. "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? did not your fathers thus? and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath."‡ An awful threatening to this purpose is in Jeremiah; "If ye will not hearken to me to hallow the sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall devour the palaces

* Isa. lviii. 14. † Hale's Contemplations, p. 260. ‡ Neh. xiii. 17, 18.

and shall not be quenched."* Again, "Because they have hid their eyes from my sabbaths," that is, treated them with contempt, "therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of mine anger."† Without public worship, God would soon be forgotten, and religion lost among us. If men are once released from the obligations of piety, no other will bind them; there will be no mutual trust and confidence among us; yea, society would be dissolved. The fear of God is the principal support of government, and of the peace and good order of the world. The more godliness there is among us, the more honesty, industry, and sobriety there will be. Nothing but religious principles will restrain men from secret wickedness, control the licentiousness of the great, who think themselves above law, and curb the wild passions of the people. And as there is no probability that religion will ever flourish or even subsist among us without sanctifying the Lord's day, it is very desirable it should be sanctified, for the good of our country; that we may become a sober, virtuous nation, and God may not be provoked to give us a prey to our enemies. Let every one, then, who wishes well to the interests of his country, show it, by keeping the sabbath from polluting it; for thus saith the Lord, "If ye diligently hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein, then shall there enter into the gates of Jerusalem kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, and they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city, shall remain for ever."‡ Sanctifying the sabbath is most important, as,

4. It will tend to the honour of God and the Redeemer. God is honoured when we entertain and express a deep and reverent sense of his perfections, acknowledge our obligations, profess our gratitude to him, and commit ourselves to his paternal goodness; and when we endeavour, by our example and influence, to promote such affections and behaviour towards him in others. Public union in religious offices keeps up a veneration for God, guards his worship against the unreasonable attacks of atheists and libertines: whereas the neglect of his worship and service is an open, visible affront to him. Sanctifying the Lord's day is rendering to God the things that are God's; giving him the homage, the time and service, which he requires; otherwise we are guilty of profaneness, injustice, robbery, and sacrilege. It is an open and visible acknowledging Christ as our Lord and master, our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him. The sabbath is a standing memorial of the covenant between God and his people, and an evidence of our relation to him. Thus it was "a sign between him and the children of Israel,"§ that they belonged to Jehovah, and were not atheists nor idolaters.

* Jer. xvii. 27. † Ezek. xxii. 26, 31. ‡ Jer. xvii. 24.
§ Exod. xxxi. 17.

Thus he saith by Ezekiel, "I gave them my sabbath to be a sign between me and them, that they may know that I am the Lord, that sanctify them;"* that they are my people and chosen to be holy. For these reasons God complains of the dishonour that was done to him by polluting his sabbaths, in many passages of the same prophet. To neglect the instituted means of religion is an affront to the divine authority, an impeachment of his wisdom in enjoining them, and a contempt of his goodness, which hath furnished us with such helps to be holy and happy. Every sincere Christian will be tender of the divine honour, and afraid of allowing himself in any thing that may carry the appearance of putting contempt upon any divine ordinances and institutions. As the Lord Jesus hath honoured the first day of the week with his name, and claims a special property in it, it should certainly be our care to keep it holy, and thus honour him, whose resurrection and love we commemorate. I add further,

5. Sanctifying the Lord's day will help to maintain and advance religion in the world. How is religion to be supported in the world? How hath it been hitherto supported? How is a sense of the presence and providence of God to be maintained, but by stated public worship? Many who only attend it out of decency and custom, may be wrought upon by it, and become really holy; at least, it lays an awe upon men's consciences; it preserves some notions of God and heaven upon their thoughts, and keeps sin under constant disgrace. Men's unhappy averseness to religion is best overcome by religion; by the stated exercises of it, and an increasing acquaintance with its nature, which they can scarce help gaining, if they attend religious worship. To this I must add, that the example of those, who strictly observe the sabbath after the season of public worship, will have a great efficacy to restrain the licentiousness of others; at least to set them on thinking, whether such strictness is not reasonable in itself, and conducive to their welfare. Therefore we should be careful in observing the day, and should abstain even from those things which we apprehend lawful and innocent, if we have reason to suspect that they may ensnare others, or lessen their veneration and regard for this holy day. Persons in higher life constitute fashions, sometimes in religion, as well as in dress and manners; and inferiors will think they may lawfully follow their business, or take their pleasure, on the Lord's day, if they see their superiors doing it. Out of regard, then, to the credit and support of religion, "let none lay a stumbling-block or occasion to fall in his Christian brother's way, but study the things that make for edification." Further, allowing yourselves in neglecting divine worship, in secular employments, visits, or amusements on the Lord's day, will weaken the hands and discourage the hearts of faithful ministers, which will be no way

* Ezek. xx. 11.

favourable to religion. It will grieve the more serious and pious of your fellow-Christians, and "offend against the generation of God's children." It will weaken the strength of that party who appear on the Lord's side, and are zealous for his honour. It was a dreadful time in these kingdoms, when two of our princes successively published a "declaration in favour of using sports and pastimes on the Lord's day," and ridiculously and impiously declared that they did it "out of a pious care for the service of God." It is much to be lamented, and will be to their lasting infamy, that some of the bishops and clergy pleaded for this allowance; while many of the judges, justices of the peace, and lay-gentry protested against it, and endeavoured to have it recalled. They publicly declared that it had occasioned such idleness, drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery, as had quite corrupted the people, and was an unspeakable injury to trade and husbandry. But the scheme of its patrons was to harass and distress the nonconformists, and make way for the spread of popery. Blessed be God, there is no such law now; the princes of the present royal house presume not to dispense with the laws of God nor of the kingdom. They have published proclamations in favour of the religious observation of the Lord's day, as the laws strictly enjoin it; and I heartily wish they were attended to and executed. I conclude this head with the words of Dr. Clarke; having spoken of the Jewish rigour in observing the sabbath, he saith, "The worse and more dangerous extreme is, the habit of spending any part of the Lord's day in idleness, gaming, and amusements; which hath been encouraged by popery, and which hath to so many persons been the corruption of their principles and the entire ruin of their morals."* I only add,

6. It will fit us for an eternal sabbath. The apostle observes, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God."† The original is, as in the margin, "the keeping of a sabbath." Heaven is described as a temple, and the work and blessedness of it as one eternal sabbath. Glorified saints rest from all their earthly labours and sorrows, and are employed perpetually in religious worship, work, and service. Now sanctifying sabbaths upon earth is an excellent preparative for this rest, as it weans the heart from earthly things, furnisheth the mind with useful knowledge, trains it to a habit of thought, reverence, and devotion, and gives it a relish for spiritual and intellectual joys. Those who, by profaning the sabbath, have never contracted that relish, can never be happy, even in heaven itself. How ill qualified are they for an eternal sabbath, who are continually saying of a short earthly one, "What a weariness is it!" I conclude this discourse with a saying of that excellent man, Mr. Philip Henry, who was always a strict and religious observer of the Lord's day. After he had spent the day in his usual manner,

* Clarke's Sermons, vol. x. serm. 3, ad fin. † Heb. iv. 9.

devoting it entirely to the exercises of religion in public or private, he used sometimes to say to his family, "Well, if this is not the way to heaven, I know not what is."

DISCOURSE VI.

PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THE FOREGOING DISCOURSES ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

LEVITICUS XXIII. 3.

The seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

WE have largely considered,

I. The obligations Christians are under to the observation of the Lord's day:

II. The manner in which it is to be observed or kept holy; namely, by a rest from all business, amusement, and recreation, and spending the whole of the day in the exercises of religion, public and private, as far as health, necessity, and charity will admit. In the last discourse we

III. Urged some motives and arguments to excite to such an observation of the sabbath; particularly, that it will make it a delightful and edifying day to our souls; it will bring a blessing on the other days of the week; it will promote the prosperity of our country; it will tend to the honour of God and the Redeemer; it will help to maintain and advance religion in the world; and will train us up and fit us for an eternal sabbath of rest, devotion, and felicity above. I proceed now to the last thing I proposed, which was to consider some inferences naturally arising from the subject.

APPLICATION.

1. *We have reason to bless God for the institution of the sabbath.* It hath been already observed, that the light of nature would direct men to set apart some time to rest from their labours, and to engage in public worship. But were it left to men to determine the proportion of time, a great many inconveniences would arise. Some cruel and covetous princes and masters would never, or but seldom, allow any repose for men or beasts. They would think once a month, or perhaps once a year, full enough for this purpose. Whereas others of a superstitious turn would impose the observation of too many such days. This would be an injury to trade and commerce, and produce a general idleness; as is the case in popish countries, where they have abundance of holy-days, besides the Lord's

day. It should therefore be thankfully acknowledged, as an instance of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he hath fixed upon a certain proportion of our time to be devoted to rest and worship; and that such a proportion as doth not break in upon the necessary cares of life, and yet is sufficient, if properly improved, for the support of religion in the world. If the sabbath were only considered a day of rest, it appears a wise institution, and worthy of him "whose tender mercies are over all his works, and who taketh care of man and beast." But when we consider it as a day sanctified and set apart for religious purposes, to improve the soul as well as to refresh and invigorate the body, it appears worthy the great Father of our spirits; and the discovering and enforcing such an institution is a valuable part of divine revelation. Accordingly, it is always represented in scripture as a glorious privilege, and an important gift of God. So Moses tells the Israelites that the Lord had given them the sabbath;* had distinguished them from other people by this favour, as he required it by an express law, with gracious promises annexed to it. In like manner, Nehemiah mentions this among other instances of God's kindness to Israel, "Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath."† God himself reminds them of this by the prophet Ezekiel; "Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, that they might know that I am the Lord, which sanctifieth them."‡ So that the institution of it is wise and merciful; not only a mark of God's sovereignty, but an instance of his kindness. Herein he hath joined our duty and our interest together. Let us then bless God that he hath given us the sabbath. Let us praise him for our civil and religious liberties; that we are not slaves to men and obliged to work on this day for impious and tyrannical masters. Let us bless him for the liberties of his house, and that we have not a famine of hearing the word. All good men are sensible they need such pauses as these in the pursuit of the world; and they will be thankful that they are so frequently called off from the defiling, distracting business of this earth, to turn their faces directly towards heaven. Let it be observed and remembered that this is the only holy-day appointed by divine authority. Christ and his apostles never consecrated any days to the commemoration of his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, but the Lord's day, and no day at all to the commemoration of saints and angels; therefore we are not obliged to observe any such days as particular churches may think proper to consecrate. It is much to be wished that they who choose to regard them would do it "to the Lord;" and they who do not regard them would bless God that they have one day in a week, set apart by his authority, for religious purposes, and are not bound by that authority to a like observation of other days. Let them at the same time be care-

* Exod. xvi. 62. † Neh. ix. 14. ‡ Ezek. xx. 12.

ful not to judge their brethren who are otherwise minded, as they may observe other days to the Lord.

2. *It is much to be lamented that the sabbath is so shamefully profaned and polluted among us.* It is a sin that every sincere Christian will lay very much to heart, and deeply bewail before God. It is a melancholy reflection that so many divines have set themselves to disprove its morality, and lessen its obligation; for when once it is set aside as a law of God, it is vain to teach it as a commandment of men. It is a grievous thing that such multitudes "forsake the assembling of themselves together," and spend the sabbath in idleness and amusement. Others only attend divine worship on one part of the day, spending the rest in visiting or recreation; and yet many of them will appear in the face of a Christian congregation, professing their belief of the fourth commandment as a law of God, and praying that he would incline their hearts to observe it. You cannot but see how wretchedly the sabbath is profaned wherever you go. One is journeying, another taking his pleasure, a third following his business, and thus the Lord's day is made (if I may so express it) a very dunghill day, on which they throw all the refuse business of the week. What multitudes are there who seem to have some periodical illness, and are sure, almost every Lord's day, to be indisposed. They content themselves with frivolous pretences of want of health, which are never urged when business or pleasure call them; or they must take physic on that day, purely because they will not spare another from their business; (for of the real want of health there is no controversy.) Thus they evidently show that they are lovers of the world and of pleasure more than lovers of God. Nay, some go further than this, and, like the Pharisees, will neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor permit others to enter; for they take pains to render those ridiculous who strictly observe the sabbath. They call their conduct scrupulous preciseness, and brand it as a piece of Jewish superstition. This is the melancholy state of our country, while, at the same time, our magistrates are asleep, and too many Christian ministers, by their doctrine and example, abet these sinful indulgences and neglects. And can we wonder that the Lord hath a controversy with us? "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Let our souls, brethren, deeply lament such provocations, and be grieved that God's holy day is so profaned, polluted, and perverted; for this is the character of a good man; "Do not I hate those that hate thee? Am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee," to affront and to neglect thine institutions? "I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies."*

3. *They who have been guilty of polluting the sabbath have*

* Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.

great reason to be humble and penitent. "Blessed is the man," saith the prophet, "that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it." The reverse of this is (and it is a dreadful thought), Cursed is the man who polluteth it. How far any of you are exposed to this curse, I must leave to God and your own consciences. I cannot but fear it lies heavy upon many. Give me leave a little to expostulate with you. You have heard the obligations you are under to sanctify the Lord's day, and the duties which God requires of you upon it. Let me now address you as Nehemiah did the nobles of Judah, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?" Doth God allow you six days for your own work, and give you, perhaps, health, prosperity, and success; and will you rob him of the seventh? "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Will you resent a robbery committed upon you by a highwayman, a house-breaker, or a servant? and will you rob God? rob him of his sacred time and his just homage? Consider what advantages you have deprived yourselves of by polluting his day; the advantages of public worship, or of private reading, reflection, and prayer; advantages that might have made you eminent and experienced Christians, and heirs of a glorious immortality. These you have lost, and for what? To save a little time or money in travelling; for an idle visit, or a trifling amusement. Have you no concern in the work of a sabbath? Nothing of any consequence depending then? Is your soul of no value? Did Christ shed his precious blood for a thing of nought? If you only attend public worship, and trifle away the rest of the sabbath, is it any thing else but custom or some sense of decency that brings you to the house of God? Were your hearts sincere, you would never think of dividing the day between God and the world. Consider further what dishonour you have done to God by polluting his sabbath; what contempt you have put upon the Lord Jesus, upon his religion, upon his ministers, and your fellow-Christians. Think what mischief you have done to others, to your children, servants, and neighbours, by setting them a bad example, and laying a stumbling-block in their way. Their profanation of the sabbath may be charged to your account; and woe to the man by whom the offence cometh! You have, many of you, been trained up in a religious observation of the sabbath; your parents or other relations have set you an example of it, and warned you against every thing that would pollute it. And is not this an aggravation of your guilt? I am persuaded your consciences often condemn you, when you violate the rest, or neglect the devotions of the sabbath. And shall the law and gospel, your ministers and parents, and your own consciences, speak and plead with you in vain? Consider further to what ungodliness and ruin this sin may increase. Many have acknowledged at the gallows, that their breaking the sabbath was

the first step that led them there; and though fools and libertines may despise such acknowledgments, they are yet an honourable testimony to God and his ways. He hath many times brought dreadful judgments upon sabbath-breakers, cut them off in the very midst of their impiety; so that it appeared to be the very finger of God, and an awful lesson, what "a fearful thing it is to provoke the Lord to jealousy, and to fall into the hands of the living God." Consider what misery such unhappy creatures are now enduring in the eternal world, who have profaned and trifled away the sabbath. They are mourning their wickedness and folly, now it is too late to correct it. They are wishing for one of these "days of the Son of man." They will never enjoy another sabbath, never hear another prayer, or another sermon. They will never have another day, or hour, or moment of rest and repose. And will you not dread having your portion among such wretched and miserable creatures? Once more; what will you say when God calls you to an account for profaned and abused sabbaths? Will you plead that it was the fashion, and that men of good characters did so, when you know the command of God is, "Be not conformed to this world;" "partake not of their sins, lest you also partake of their plagues?" What excuse will you make for yourselves before the supreme Judge, for having violated a most profitable, wise, and merciful institution? You have need to be deeply humbled and truly penitent, before this transitory scene closes; and I pray God to convince you of your sin and danger, before you fall under his dreadful everlasting curse.

4. *They who have hitherto religiously observed the sabbath, ought to be thankful and persevere.* Be thankful, my brethren, to and for your parents, masters, and teachers, who kept you under such restraints on that day, as you now esteem right and salutary, though in younger life they might appear irksome to you: who kept you from running with others to the same excess of folly and impiety, and taught you the good ways of the Lord. Be thankful especially for divine grace, that blessed their pious attempts, and led you to sanctify God's sabbath and reverence the sanctuary. Let me exhort you to proceed in the good old way of keeping the sabbath day holy. Let others censure and make a jest of you, as being too scrupulous on this head; it is an error on the best hand; and you will never repent of your stedfastness in despising their censures, and devoting the Lord's day to the Lord's work. The most effectual way to answer the objections and sneers of such scorners, is to let them see, by your whole conduct, that you are the better for your sabbath employment; that it gives a tincture of religion to your daily behaviour; makes you diligent in business on your own days, honest in your dealings, frugal in your expenses, charitable to the poor, affable and good-natured in your families, and ready to every

good word and work. Whatever others do, let me entreat you to do this; still "lay hold on it," and "keep the sabbath from polluting it;" for "blessed is the man that doeth so."

5. *They who are obliged to spend solitary sabbaths should endeavour to improve their time well.* When our Lord was foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, he saith to his disciples, "Pray that your flight be not on the sabbath day;" * where he intimates that though it may be lawful to fly from their enemies on that day, it would add to their distress to be obliged to have their flight upon it. In like manner it will be grievous to a good man to be detained from public worship, or hindered in the private exercises of religion, by cases of necessity. When such cases occur, and God evidently gives you a dispensation from the general law of the sabbath, let it be your care to employ your time as well as you can; in reading, in pious thoughts, reflection, and prayer. If you are necessarily obliged to travel, endeavour to converse with God and your own hearts by the way; and let your acquaintance know the necessity you are under, that they may not make an ill use of your example. Let those who are confined by illness, with sick persons or young children, endeavour to have their hearts fixed on God and divine things; let them not speak their own words, nor pursue their own thoughts; but labour to have the frame of their spirits suited to the design of the day. Then may they hope that God will be with them, and make the house of confinement and affliction as "the house of God and the gate of heaven;" and that those words may be applied to them, in which God promises his pious people, when dispersed in Babylon and mourning the want of public ordinances, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come." † I add, once more,

6. *We should do all we can to engage others to sanctify the sabbath.* Providence gives us many opportunities, and lays us under many obligations, to promote the observation of the sabbath in others. I am not addressing to any magistrates, or I would strenuously urge them to put our good laws in execution against those that profane it; else the guilt will in part lie upon them. Thus Nehemiah contended with the nobles of Judah, because they did not punish those who followed their trades on the sabbath day; and said unto them, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?" But it is our duty, my friends, to assist the magistrate in this good work. It is our duty to inform him of those who profane God's sabbath, where their crimes come within the cognizance of the law; and in this respect, as the prophet expresseth it, to "call for justice." ‡ It is ridiculous to complain of magistrates neglecting their duty, if we will not do ours. If we see persons following their business and sports, it is our duty, from every principle of Christianity,

* Matt. xxiv. 20. † Ezek x 16. ‡ Isa. lix. 4.

loyalty, and benevolence, to lay an information against them. It is pity that any should be backward to come in as witnesses in behalf of God and his day. To say, I will not turn informer, is in effect to say, I am a hypocrite or a trifling, lukewarm Christian; that have very little love to myself or to my brethren. It is to say with cursed Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Can this negligence be reconciled with love to God, or concern for the happiness of men? Can it be reconciled with prayers for a reformation of manners? Will our zeal bring us under an odious name? What then? Is it odious in the sight of God? Is it odious in the sight of good men? Was not the Lord of the sabbath called Beelzebub? There is, as it were, a conflict in the world between God and Satan, between piety and profaneness; and can he be a good man that stands neuter? When God saith, Who is on my side? shall we cowardly draw back, and never appear for him and his cause? Vice is a mean and sneaking thing; and a resolute Christian, who is zealous for the Lord of hosts, will be had in reputation by those whom he is even the instrument of punishing. I heartily wish we had more Christian courage and self-denial, that we may bring to punishment those who contemn God, and may "rise up against those that rise up against him." Further, you are under indispensable obligations to engage your children and servants to sanctify the sabbath. This you may do, and can have no reasonable excuse for neglecting it. The fourth commandment requireth all parents, masters, and mistresses to oblige their children and servants to keep it; "Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant." Parents are to be careful that neither their sons nor daughters do any thing inconsistent with the rest of the sabbath. One of the first things children are capable of learning, is to distinguish this day from others. They ought to be obliged to lay aside their other days' exercises and diversions; and be brought to the public assembly, even before they are capable of exercising themselves to godliness, or judging much of the reason and design of the day. As soon as they are capable of understanding and learning, it is your duty to inform them of these. Read to them, and teach them by heart, the fourth commandment, and those texts in the prophet Isaiah which I have been insisting upon, and which recommend the observation of the sabbath. Let parents restrain their children from rambling about; from idly staring in the streets on the Lord's day; set them an example of sabbath sanctification; and represent to them the reasonableness and the advantages of it. The charge next lies upon masters and mistresses, with respect both to men-servants and to maid-servants. You are to employ no servants in any trade or calling; nor should they be allowed to follow their diversions; nor are they to be employed in the business of the family, so as

to be deprived of public worship. I must censure and condemn the practice of many, in keeping servants at home one part of the day merely to get dinner; because it is unnecessary if you will be content with plain food; and it is undoubtedly an injury to the souls of your servants. This one consideration, I should think, would make any good masters or mistresses willing to deny themselves, and be content with what may not be quite so elegant and palatable: that it is for the good of an immortal soul; a soul for which Christ died; Christ, who "pleased not himself." The pious Mr. Hervey, in a letter to a friend who had sent him some venison on a Saturday, thus expresses himself; "I thank you for your venison; but it will not be dressed to-morrow. My whole business is to be at court; the King of heaven hath sent positive orders; and he will not excuse either man-servant or maid-servant." You are obliged to restrain your servants from going abroad, and mispending their time on that day. Such is the character of the generality of servants, that this will be a disagreeable restraint to them. They think they may as well have liberty as other servants, whose masters and mistresses care not for their souls. But it is your duty to insist upon their sanctifying the sabbath. If they will not submit to this restraint, part with them. If ever they become serious and good, they will thank you for your care: if not, it is no matter what becomes of them, and your family is rid of an impious, profane member; for I will venture to say, a servant that looks upon it as a grievance to be kept from rambling on the sabbath, and to be employed for a reasonable time in reading and prayer, is utterly destitute of all religion, and hath not the fear of God before his or her eyes. For want of this wise and salutary restraint they contract a habit of idleness, get into ill company, and follow bad courses; and so may do you or your children infinitely more mischief one way, than their best service can do you good another. The disobedience and degeneracy of servants, so commonly complained of, is very much owing to their neglect of the sabbath. It is a good saying of Bishop Reynolds, "Take care that your servants do their duty to God, and God will take care they do their duty to you." I pray God to give you, who are servants, wisdom and grace to value and improve those religious advantages which you enjoy in many families; and enable your masters and mistresses to do their duty faithfully to you. My friends, the souls of our servants are committed to us; and if they learn wickedness in our families, if we neglect doing our part to make them good, God will reckon with us for it; and I heartily wish their blood may never be required at our hands. Once more, let us all, in every circumstance and rank in life, unite our earnest prayers that God would incline men's hearts to keep the law of the sabbath better; particularly that he would stir up our magistrates to

put the laws in execution against the profaners of it, and to be, in this and every other respect, the "ministers of God for good." Let us pray that parents, masters, and mistresses may keep the sabbath holy themselves; and, as far as possible, oblige their children and servants to do so; that by "putting iniquity from their tabernacles," they may have the blessing of God upon them. Let us pray that the rising generation may early learn to reverence and love the sabbath, and contract a relish for reading, devotion, and religious converse. And let us pray that God would quicken our own spirits, that we may not be ashamed to appear singularly and steadily good, and religiously to observe the sabbath, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, notwithstanding its evil examples, pernicious maxims, and bitterest censures. Then shall we find improvement in religion, and peace in our own consciences. Then shall we have praise of God, enjoy many comfortable foretastes and earnests of the eternal sabbath, and at length be admitted to join in its work and share in its joy.

Having thus finished what I intended on this important subject, let me say, it becomes you to inquire what effect it hath had upon your minds, and what improvement you have made of all that hath been said. If any of you will proceed in profaning the sabbath; if you will still pursue your journeys, make familiar visits, do your own ways, and find your own pleasures, give me leave to say, you will be more inexcusable than ever. You are answerable to God for your contempt of his institution, and all the injury you hereby do to your own souls, to the souls of others, and to the credit and interest of religion. May I not hope that some of you are come to a resolution to leave off these irreligious and mischievous practices? that you and your houses will more carefully sanctify the sabbath, and more steadily serve the Lord? Give me leave to add one general remark on the whole subject. In order to judge of the character of my acquaintance, and their real state towards God, I have always observed and inquired how they kept the sabbath. I look upon the religious observation of it as a good proof of their piety; and a neglect of it, as a melancholy proof that they are insincere in heart, whatever they may profess: and by taking in the whole of their conduct, as far as it hath come to my knowledge, I think I have not been deceived in my sentiments concerning them. Those that have strictly observed the sabbath have been, in other respects, the best Christians; those that have been careless herein have shown, by other instances in their behaviour, that they have not had the root of the matter in them. So that, upon the whole, I must be of the same mind with that pious divine, Mr. Bolton, "It is a thousand to one that a strict observer of the Lord's day is sincere towards God; and as great odds that a sabbath-breaker, however he

may deceive himself, is a hypocrite." I conclude this discourse and subject with the words of Nehemiah, after he had described his zealous attempts to promote the sanctification of the sabbath, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."* Amen.

TWO DISCOURSES

ON THE HEAVENLY STATE, CONSIDERED UNDER THE IDEA OF A SABBATH.

DISCOURSE I.

HEBREWS IV. 9.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

I HAVE been largely discoursing to you on the important subject of the religious observation of the sabbath. And I hope it will not be unpleasant or unedifying to have your thoughts now directed to the eternal sabbath, or that state of perfect rest, devotion, holiness, and bliss, which God hath prepared for his people. It was customary amongst the Jews to represent future happiness under the idea of a sabbath, and expound many of those passages in their law, where the sabbath is mentioned, as typifying or prefiguring the heavenly state. And I think they are justified herein by those passages of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle represents the institutions of the law as "patterns," figures, and shadows, "of heavenly things;" and by what he says to the Colossians, that their sabbath days were "a shadow of things to come,"† not merely of the Christian sabbath, its rest and work, but the better blessings of the future state. But the justice of this allusion and comparison appears most plainly from the context, in which the apostle shows, that we Christians have a rest to hope and labour for as well as the Israelites; a rest typified by God's resting on the seventh day and blessing it. He proves this by that passage in the ninety-fifth psalm, where David intimates that there was then a rest to be obtained by God's people; and that, in order to possess it, it was necessary they should hear his voice, and not be disobedient as their fathers were. "If," saith the apostle, "Jesus," or, as it should be rendered, "Joshua had given them rest," that final rest, which God intends for his people, David "would not have spoken of" another day of

* Neh. xiii. 22. † Col. ii. 17.

trial, implying "another rest." What God saith of entering into his rest cannot be confined to their rest in Canaan, because David speaks of another rest; even when they were in possession of Canaan, under the government of David, and enjoyed God's sabbaths there. If Joshua had given them all that rest which was typified by the Jewish sabbath, David would not have spoken of another and future rest. From these principles he draws this consequence in the text, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God." And it is observable, that the apostle in this place changeth the word he had before used to signify rest. That used in the former verses chiefly denotes a cessation or rest from labour and trouble. But the word in our text is, as in the margin, "the keeping of a sabbath," that is, a holy rest. So that you see, the happiness of heaven is represented as the constant keeping of a sabbath. A most instructive and delightful representation! I propose,

I. To consider the idea or description here given of heaven as a sabbath, or holy rest;

II. To show for whom it remains, namely, for the people of God; and then make a suitable application of the subject.

I. *I am to consider the idea or description here given of heaven, as a sabbath or holy rest.*

As we have formerly considered the rest and the work of the sabbath on earth, so, in order to illustrate the apostle's comparison and idea in the text, let us consider heaven as a state of perfect rest, as a state of the noblest devotion and enjoyment, and, on both these accounts, infinitely exceeding our best sabbaths on earth.

1. Heaven is represented as a state of rest. Particularly a rest from all earthly labours and employments, from the molestation of enemies, from the anxieties and sorrows of life, and a settlement in a state of perfect serenity and full complacency.

(1.) It is a rest from all earthly labours and employments, from all such labours and employments as we are engaged about here below relating to the body. So it is said in the verse following the text, "He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." He enters on as complete a rest as God did when he had finished all his works. Here, as Solomon observeth, "all things are full of labour." And it is wisely appointed by Providence, that such creatures as we are should have our hands employed in making provision for the sustenance and convenience of the body, and for the advantage of our fellow-creatures. The first man was doomed, in the sweat of his face to procure and eat his bread; and his descendants are more or less obliged to labour. Though this be necessary in itself, and

conducive to the health of the body and the general good, yet to souls sensible of their intellectual powers and immortal nature it is tedious. It is particularly so, as these labours and cares consume most of our time, and are apt to divert the attention from better things. But in the future state there will be no further occasion to inquire, "what we shall eat and drink, and wherewith we shall be clothed." This earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up; and all the toil that is now spent upon it and its products, shall be over. The body will not want those provisions and accommodations which are necessary for it at present. It will be changed into a spiritual body, capable of subsisting without daily supplies; not subject to hunger, thirst, or weariness. Good men shall be "like the angels" of God, and live and converse as those spirits do. The soul likewise will no more labour and toil in forming schemes and carrying on designs suited only to the body and the present world. Nor will it toil, as it now doth, in the pursuit of truth and knowledge; nor be exercised with such laborious researches, and tedious long inquiries, before it can come to any tolerable certainty. "Much study" in heaven will neither be a perplexity to the mind nor "a weariness to the flesh." The laborious duties of the Christian life, as watchfulness, mortification, and self-denial, will then be superseded, and both body and mind enjoy repose after all the fatigues of this pilgrimage. So it is said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours."* Further,

(2.) It is a rest from the molestation of enemies. This is an enemy's country. We are like the Israelites in the wilderness, surrounded with them on every side. Satan and his confederates disturb and tempt us. They are numerous, strong, and subtle. They combine with the corruptions of our own hearts; and make use of every occurrence to do us mischief, and graft some temptation upon every circumstance of life. But good men shall rest from Satan's temptations. "The accuser" and tempter of Christians "shall be cast out," and never give them any more disturbance. Here the world and the things of it are our enemies. They are suited to our animal nature; and some love to them is allowable, or we should never pursue them. But we often exceed in our affection to the world. Our hearts are too much entangled with it, and we abuse it. But there is a time coming, when this evil world shall be no more; when the soul shall get beyond its power, be superior to all its allurements, and never be distracted and divided by it. Here wicked men are the enemies of God's people; the righteous are grieved with their ungodly conversation, and exposed to temptations by their necessary intercourse with them. They often meet with violent persecution, cruel mockings, or bitter reproaches from

* Rev. xiv. 13.

them; even for their piety and steadiness. But "the wicked shall be turned into hell," and never molest God's people any more. In that better world "the wicked cease from troubling;" and those that are "wearied" with their wickedness, "are at rest." They shall sit down with Christ on his throne; that is, enjoy a state of repose, dignity, and triumph. Again,

(3.) It is a rest from the anxieties and sorrows of life. "Man is born to trouble," and good men have a large share of it. But it shall all cease, when they enter into God's rest. Here they share in public calamities and have many distresses, alarms, and fears, relating to the concerns of their own nation and the church of God. But there, all national, public connexions are dissolved. That is "a kingdom which can never be moved," or shaken. Sword, famine, pestilence, storms, earthquakes, are never heard of there. Good men have many social troubles; many arising from their connexions with others, in the same town, neighbourhood, family, and church; from many that hate peace, love contention, sow discord, and spread scandal; from their ignorance, perverseness, pride, and prejudice. They share in the sorrows of others, and, while at ease in their own minds, weep with them that weep. They have many domestic troubles and distresses; arising from the difficulty of providing for their families, their uncertainty how to dispose of them in life, and their anxieties about their welfare. The pains, sickness, and death of their friends, children, and other relatives, affect them much; their perverse, ill behaviour, more. But hereafter they rest from all these troubles. Good men will all meet in the better country, and have lost all their imperfections; every thing that is the foundation of sorrow to themselves, or uneasiness to others: and those that are wicked will be removed to such a distance from them, as to give them no more vexation. The people of God are no more exposed to personal afflictions, to poverty, pain, or sickness, to tedious days or wearisome nights. Not one of that long catalogue of diseases, to which human nature is now liable, shall ever attack them. The bodies of the saints, now vile, weak, and corruptible, shall become glorious, strong, incorruptible. The mind too shall have no imperfections. Its inbred corruptions shall be removed. There will be no irregular desires and tumultuous passions. They shall cease, and rest from sin, their greatest and most deadly enemy. They shall be free from its power, dominion, relics, and very being. Thus we are told in scripture,* that "there shall be no more curse," that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," and "there shall be neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things are passed away." Once more,

(4.) This rest includes a settlement in a state of perfect

* Rev. xxi. 4.

serenity and full complacency. "God rested from his work on the seventh day, and was refreshed."* Thus the rest of good people shall be so entire and complete, that it may be in some measure compared to this rest of God. There is nothing from within or without to disturb their repose. They look back, with satisfaction and thankfulness, on the duties they have discharged, the graces they have acquired, yea, the tumultuous and tempting scenes through which they have passed. And they sit down in an undisturbed state, resting in God, triumphing in their interest in him and enjoyment of him. They have not one desire ungratified. They have nothing to wish for more. Their comforts have no sting in them, and their joy cannot be excessive. Thus the devout psalmist saith, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."† Thus, as the prophet Isaiah observes, "the work of righteousness; shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."‡ This is the first thing included in the notion of heaven here given us, as a sabbath: it is a state of perfect rest. I observe,

2. It is a state of the noblest devotion, service, and enjoyment. The greatest part of this rest, as above described, would constitute only a negative happiness; or rather would be no happiness at all. A state of inactivity would be quite inconsistent with our rational natures. Had our faculties no object to work upon, after we have done with this world; or none suited to their nature; or had they no relish for such an exercise, they would turn in upon the soul, torment it, and make it miserable; this will be the case of the wicked in hell. But besides the rest above described, the soul will be continually exercised in the service of God, and in the contemplation and enjoyment of his infinite perfections; and from hence ariseth its happiness. The sabbath above is not a bare ceasing from sin; but the exercise of all those holy duties which are proper to that state of rest; all the acts of homage, gratitude, and obedience, which the nature of God, our relation to him, and happiness in him require. Heaven is described as a state of perfect holiness. The sabbath is to be kept holy now; and the happiness of heaven will consist in acts, exercises, and enjoyments resembling those which belong to our present earthly sabbaths. Particularly, the soul will be for ever improving in its acquaintance with the blessed God. It will be employed in observing, studying, and learning his excellencies; considering the relation in which he stands to the several orders of beings through the universe, and the schemes of his providence and grace relating to them. God's people will see him with an intellectual eye; understand more of his excellencies and perfections than they can now do; and their continually improving knowledge of him will excite

* Exod. xxxi. 17. † Psalm xvii. 15. ‡ Isaiah xxxii. 17.

the most ardent love to him, and the highest satisfaction in his favour and friendship. This will produce the sublimest exercises of devotion, and lead them to pour out their whole souls in the most exalted strains of love and praise. They will enjoy communion with him, when they retire from their fellow-saints, to converse with their ever-present God and Saviour. As sabbaths below are holy convocations, where numbers join together to worship their Creator, it cannot be imagined but that holy men of the same nation, and of the same church, may join at stated times in some public acts of homage and praise. And sometimes the whole "general assembly" may join together in this blessed work; especially when some new discovery of God is made to them, or some new scene of providence and grace opens upon them. The Lord Jesus will also be the object of their praise and their love; and they will sing a new song to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb. Christ will be seen by them in all his glory. The blessed above will all be "priests unto God," instructing, edifying and animating one another. The angels, or spirits of higher rank, may be employed as preachers in this heavenly sabbath; to open to different assemblies the astonishing scenes of providence, the wonders of redeeming love, and the unsearchable riches of divine grace; and they may, with celestial ardour, lead their devotion. Yea, the Lord Jesus Christ himself may sometimes condescend to be a preacher to that vast congregation, and inform them of things beyond the comprehension and expression of angels. He may give them further light into the mystery of the divine nature and his own; and display to them the manifold wonders and boundless goodness of God. No doubt this will be attended with fresh communications of light and love from the inexhaustible source of them. And these will produce such a height and sublimity of devotion, and such transports of joy in acts of praise, as they have now no idea of, and which even at their first entrance on this blessed work in heaven they did not think their natures capable of attaining. Further, this heavenly rest includes active services for God. On the sabbath we are to do God's work: and in the sabbatism above, good men will do the will of God like the angels, with ardour, rapidity, and joy. "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face."* They will wait the signals of his will, and execute his pleasure, according to their different capacities and abilities. Acts of charity are proper and becoming on the sabbath now. And though the saints above will have no bodily wants to supply, no afflictions to call for pity, no distresses to relieve; yet as creatures they must be imperfect, and may want friendly offices, especially at their first entrance on this rest. And it will be the delightful employment of the blessed, to dis-

* Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

cover the tenderest affection to each other; to communicate knowledge, goodness, and pleasure to one another, and to quicken one another's spirits in the devotion and work of God's heavenly temple. This is as clear and concise a view as I could give you of the devotion and enjoyment of the heavenly sabbath. In order to illustrate this matter further, let us consider it in a comparative light, and observe,

3. It infinitely exceeds our best sabbaths on earth. And that in these particulars: there is nothing to interrupt the rest, or to prevent the pleasure of the work; and it is eternal.

(1.) There is nothing to interrupt the rest above, or hinder our engaging in the glorious work. Here, the necessary cares of life break in upon our sabbaths, and too often distract our thoughts. We unavoidably lose much of our sacred time in eating, drinking, dressing, and going to the solemn assembly. Here there must be an intermission for sleep; otherwise we shall soon tire, sink, and die. But the spiritual bodies of the saints need no recruit of food and sleep. The garments of light and immortality never need to be put off. They never wear out, never fade, never grow out of fashion. Their spiritual bodies fly, swift as the morning light, from place to place, and are no incumbrance to the spirit. Here, we are often detained from the house of God, shut up, as his prisoners, for whole days; sometimes for months and years together. While our fellow-Christians are enjoying the delights of the sanctuary, we are groaning through pain, or sighing away the tedious hours in pining sickness. We take up the beautiful, melancholy complaint of the pious Dr. Watts:

> "Lo the sweet day of sacred rest returns,
> ——————————but not to me returns
> Rest with the day: ten thousand hurrying thoughts
> Bear me away tumultuous, far from heaven
> And heavenly work: alas! flesh drags me down
> From things celestial, and confines my sense
> To present melodies. Unhappy state!
> Where the poor spirit is subdued to endure
> Unholy idleness; a painful absence
> From God and heaven and angels' blessed work;
> And bound to bear the agonies and woes
> That sickly flesh and shattered nerves impose."

There are none of these sad complaints above. The inhabitants never say they are sick: nor are they ever confined or distressed by the sickness, pains, and sorrows of others. The youngest child of light is able to take care of himself, and to join in the work of heaven; and needs not detain any of the elder from it. Again,

(2.) There is nothing to prevent our attention to the work, and our pleasure in it. There will be nothing of this kind in ourselves and nothing in those about us. Nothing in ourselves, our frame, our situation, or circumstances. Our faculties here

are weak and imperfect. They comprehend but little of God, and soon tire in the contemplation and worship of him. A thousand wandering thoughts crowd in upon our minds, and call them off from God and divine things. But there our faculties will be exalted to the highest degree of natural perfection. There will be no darkness upon the understanding. The will shall be pure, and cleared of all its depravity. The heart will no longer hanker after the world, nor be drawn aside by its impertinences. The affections will all be regular, composed, and fixed upon their proper objects; and no distraction will disengage the heart from its beloved work. Here, we are absent from God; our faith is weak and our love languid. There, we shall be near him, and see him face to face. Faith shall be turned into sight, and perfect love shall exclude all doubt and fear. God will no more reveal himself through means and instruments, but we shall "see as we are seen, and know as we are known." Here, the body is a great clog and hindrance to the soul in sabbath work. There, by becoming a spiritual body, it shall be a help to it; shall be refined and fitted for spiritual exercises. There will be no heavy eyes, sinking spirits, or weary limbs. Here we are forced to be at a great deal of pains to prepare the heart for sabbath work, and to keep the thoughts in any tolerable measure fixed, while engaged in it. But there the heart will always be in frame, and the work will be performed with ease and with delight. Here we often carry our sorrows and cares with us to the house of God, and cannot keep them out. There, they will never enter. Here our communion with God is imperfect, and his blessings flow down upon us by drops. There our communion will be complete, and the influences of his Spirit, enlightening, quickening, comforting, will come upon us in a full stream, and produce rivers of uninterrupted pleasure. Here we may exceed, even in sabbath work; and, as good Mr. Philip Henry expresseth it, "there may be over-doing in well-doing." But there is no danger of that above. The body and the mind will be suited to one another, and suited to their work; never wearied with it, never weary of it. Again,

There will be nothing in those about us to prevent our attention to the work, and pleasure in it. Here we are grieved to see others profaning the sabbath, affronting God's authority, and neglecting his institutions. But not one of these impious souls shall have a place in God's upper temple. Here we see much in our fellow-worshippers which gives us concern and uneasiness. We observe that sometimes a trifling reason keeps them away from God's house; sometimes they come late and with indifference, as if they had no love to the habitation of God's house, but thought his service a weariness; sometimes we have the grief to see them sleeping, staring about, and appearing inattentive and unaffected. But there every

soul will be all life, ardour, spirit, and activity in God's work nor will there be the least sign of any one's disliking it, or being weary of it. Here, sometimes the masters of our assemblies are negligent in their preparations, cold in their addresses to men and God. Sometimes bodily infirmities render their services less acceptable, entertaining, and edifying to their hearers. But the treasure will not then be lodged in earthen vessels. In our churches below, good and bad are mixed together. We join in sabbath work with some whom we cannot but fear we shall never meet above; and with whom, therefore, we cannot enjoy that friendly and entire communion which is desirable. But there all the assembly is righteous. The whole church is "without spot or wrinkle," and there is not one jarring string in all the harmony of heaven. Here only a few Christians can meet and engage together in sabbath work. There, all the saints of all ages, and from all places, shall meet, and constitute one general and vast assembly. They shall all have communion in this rest, devotion, and glory. They shall all be "spirits made perfect," and assist and animate the devotion of each other, and increase one another's rapture and joy. I am to add, which crowns the whole, that it exceeds our best sabbaths on earth,

(3.) Because it is eternal. It is a sabbath that hath "no night." Our sabbaths here are quickly ended; their pleasures are soon over. We must return to sleep, and to the toils and labours of life. But the immortal bodies of the saints never want repose. Their work is their rest. No work-days return after the heavenly sabbath. Mortality is the disgrace of all earthly delights. The rest which remains for God's people is eternal. Days, nights, weeks, months, years, time, these are words that have no signification in heaven. These are "the former things" which have all "passed away." "They rest not day or night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple;"* that is, continually and for ever; for we are expressly told, that "there is no night there;" and our Lord promiseth those, who overcome their lusts and enemies, that he "will make them pillars in the temple of his God, and they shall go out no more." "Because Christ lives, they shall live also," and "be ever with the Lord." This enhances the glory and felicity of the heavenly sabbath; that it is a sabbath without pause, without interruption, and without end.

Thus have I, in my poor imperfect way, attempted to describe that rest which remaineth for the people of God. I have said enough to show you that it is inconceivably valuable, glorious, and happy. And I pray that, through divine grace, it may be enough to dispose you all earnestly to desire it, diligently to pursue it, and to improve your sabbaths on earth, as a prepara-

* Rev. vii. 15.

tion for it. I conclude this discourse with the words of Dr. Bates, "If I could speak never so long on this subject, all my thoughts and expressions would fall infinitely short of it. It is our happiness that we are incapable of fully understanding it. So that here our incapacity turns to our advantage, and should excite our most solicitous pursuit. For it is infinitely above all that we can ask or think, even this rest that remaineth to the people of God."

DISCOURSE II.

THE HEAVENLY STATE CONSIDERED UNDER THE IDEA OF A SABBATH.

HEBREWS IV. 9.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

"As I hope to be saved," is a common protestation with some of the most impious men; which plainly shows their great ignorance, both of themselves and the terms of acceptance and salvation. What men wish, they easily believe; and, not being able to shake off their fears of the wrath to come, they are glad to cherish any presumptuous hope, which may make their consciences in some measure easy, while they go on in their trespasses. This is so common and fatal an error, that it is necessary often to remind professing Christians, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is peculiarly proper, after the glory and felicity of the heavenly state have been described, to set forth the temper and qualifications necessary in order to our obtaining it. This is what I am now to do.

In the former discourse I proposed to consider,

I. The idea given in the text of the heavenly state, as a sabbath or holy rest; and,

II. To show for whom it remaineth, namely, for the people of God. In considering the heavenly state as a sabbath, or holy rest, it was observed, that it is a rest from all such labours and employments as relate to this world, from the molestation of enemies, from the anxieties and sorrows of life, and it is a settlement in a state of perfect serenity and full complacency. This sabbatism is likewise a state of the noblest devotion, service, and enjoyment, in the contemplation and worship of God, obedience to him, and serviceableness to our fellow-saints, as there is nothing to interrupt the rest, or to prevent the pleasure of the work; and it is eternal. I now proceed to show,

II. *For whom this rest remaineth:*

Namely, for the people of God. For the illustration of this, it may be sufficient to observe, that this expression doth not merely signify the professors of the gospel, but those among

them who sincerely choose the Lord for their God, and act worthy of this relation and consistent with it.

1. This rest doth not belong to all the professors of the gospel merely as such. The Israelites indeed, as a nation, were distinguished from the other nations of the earth, and were styled "the people of God." In like manner, all that believe the gospel are "the people of God." The gentiles, saith the apostle, "who had not been a people, became the people of God." Christians, as distingnished from Jews and heathens, are now the people of God, in the same sense as the Jews were. But though they are entitled to many glorious privileges and blessings by this relation to God, yet it is expected and required of them, that they improve these privileges, and "walk worthy the calling wherewith they are called;" or else they will forfeit the favour of God, and come short of eternal salvation. This was the case among the Israelites; "All were not Israel," the sincere servants of God, "who were of Israel." Many of the Israelites, to whom a promise of possessing the land of Canaan was made, came short of it, and never entered into God's rest. In like manner, many of the professed disciples of Christ, who have the hope of heavenly rest set before them, will come short of it. The apostle argues from the case of the Israelites to that of Christians. Though the Israelites were "all baptized into Moses, did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, yet with many of them God was displeased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness."* These things were written for our admonition, that we do not presume upon our privileges, and neglect to improve them. In our context he further urges their example, and cautions Christians against that unbelief by which so many of them came short of Canaan. He tells us there is danger of our being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin;" and that then only we are made "partakers of Christ," of those peculiar blessings, and that final happiness, which he will confer upon his people, "if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end." That this rest is not provided for all professing Christians as such, is very evident from the nature of it. For ungodly, sensual, worldly men could not relish its happiness, nor are they capable of performing its work. It is evident from the rectitude of the divine nature. For God loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and can never treat disobedient and obstinate sinners as his favourites and friends; or fail to show his displeasure against their wickedness. This is evident from innumerable declarations of the holy scriptures; in which the terms of acceptance and salvation are so plainly expressed, that an honest inquirer cannot be deceived, and imagine that any rest remaineth for the wicked. On the contrary,

* 1 Cor. x.

2. The people of God, for whom this rest remaineth, are those, and those only, who choose the Lord for their God, and act worthy of such a relation, and consistent with it. God's people are his peculiar treasure; whom he hath redeemed to himself by the blood of his Son; whose hearts have been renewed by his Holy Spirit; who have solemnly avouched the Lord for their covenant God through Christ Jesus; and sincerely presented their souls and bodies to him, as a living sacrifice. They are such as have yielded themselves entirely to God and his service; without making a reserve in favour of any one sin; without making an exception to any one duty; but are desirous to have respect to all his commands. Faith, as it signifies reposing the confidence of our souls upon Christ, and acts as a principle of obedience to his laws, is the grand qualification for our being the people of God and entering into rest. The apostle observes, "We which have believed do enter into rest." Faith is always the way by which men must expect to enter into whatever rest God promiseth, in one age or another. Those that sincerely believe and faithfully retain the gospel, are the only persons that can enter into God's rest. It is provided for such as live under the restraints of the divine authority; under a sense of God's inestimable love, and their obligations to his service; and who persevere and patiently continue in well doing; for he alone that endureth to the end shall be saved. For such as these, and none but such, this rest remaineth; and it would be inconsistent with the holiness of God, the character of Christ, the whole strain of the gospel, and the very nature of this rest, to admit any others into it. To them this rest is sure. It "remaineth" for them; hid with Christ in God; safely laid up in the unseen world; and they shall finally possess it, and never lose it. I would be solicitous, brethren, to guard you against fatal mistakes; and I hope what hath been said will be sufficient to show you, that none but sincere Christians have a rest remaining for them. I would therefore proceed to the application of the subject, which will furnish out the following useful reflections.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let us be thankful that such a rest remaineth, and is prepared for God's people.* We know, by daily experience, that the present is a trying disquieting scene; that "man which is born of a woman is of few days, and they are full of trouble." There is nothing can so effectually relieve the mind under its heavy burdens and painful apprehensions, as the expectation of a speedy, a complete, and an everlasting rest. Let us bless God for this relief. We might have been left to "weary ourselves for vanity," "seeking rest and finding none;" seeking it indeed as most do, where it is not to be found, in earthly things; without any clear prospect of a rest beyond the grave, or any encouragement to

seek after it; till, after the labours and sorrows of life, we had gone down to destruction. We should be thankful to the Father of our spirits for those obscure hints which reason gives us of a rest hereafter; though it might be able to go no further than to conceive of a mixed state of being, wherein there should be less evil and more happiness than in the present. But the hope and assurance that there is a perfect and uninterrupted rest for God's people, and this grounded upon the authority of God and the resurrection of Christ, is surely enough to fill our hearts with gratitude and our tongues with praise. You are thankful, I hope, brethren, for any respite from toil and from sorrow now; thankful for a few hours' sleep, after a wearisome day, or a night full of tossing; thankful for a short interval of ease, through a cordial or composing draught prepared by the skill of man. And will you not be thankful for the views of everlasting ease and repose; yea, of being "comforted according to the days in which you have been afflicted, and the years in which you have seen evil?" A grand cordial, that will never lose its efficacy; prepared by the skill and goodness of your heavenly Father, and administered by the hand of your Redeemer and Saviour. You are thankful, I hope, for the rest of the sabbath, when you lay aside the hurries and cares of this distracting, polluting world. And shall not the prospect of an everlasting sabbath excite the most grateful emotions in your breasts to him "who hath begotten you to this lively hope, by the resurrection of his Son from the dead?" You are grieved, Christians, that you serve God so poorly on his own day; that so many infirmities, distractions, and imperfections attend your sabbath work. Oh, let all that is within you praise him, for the prospect of that better sabbath, when these things shall be done away; when you shall become like the angels of God; and resemble them in the ardour of their devotion, the activity of their services, and the greatness and duration of their bliss.

2. *How glorious a leader is Christ, who conducts his people to such a rest.* "If Joshua," saith the apostle, "had given" the Israelites all that "rest" which was typified by the sabbath, David "would not afterwards have spoken of" another day, implying "another rest." But God hath provided some better thing for us, even an eternal rest; and Jesus Christ is appointed "the captain of our salvation," to lead us to it. What were the pleasures of the land of Canaan, though a good land, and the glory of all lands, to that "better country, even an heavenly one," which we profess to seek and hope for? The Israelites, though settled in Canaan by Joshua, were frequently disturbed in the possession of it. Yea, they lost it by sin; were driven out of their goodly heritage, led captive by their enemies, and are now vagabonds upon the face of the earth. But Christ conducts his people to a better rest; to an inheritance which he

hath purchased for them, and which is described with the greatest pomp of language; and every idea of things grand, magnificent, and delightful is taken in to exalt our conception of it. Christ is gone before to prepare this rest for his people. He assists and enables them to overcome all those enemies who oppose their entrance upon it. He furnishes them, by his Spirit, with those dispositions and graces which render them meet for it. He will at length send his angels to conduct them to it; receive them to himself; and will be the everlasting object of their veneration and love. When he comes the second time, to complete his whole church, and gather together all his people to their rest, he will "be admired in his saints and glorified in all them that believe." And it becomes us to admire and glorify him now, as the leader and guardian of his people, and "the author of eternal redemption to all them that obey him."

3. *Let us all fear, lest we come short of this rest.* It is, as I hinted above, the design of the apostle in the context, to warn Christians of the danger they are in of coming short of heaven, as the Israelites did of Canaan. Let us attend to his caution, and maintain a holy solicitude, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should never partake of it." I have addressed to you all as God's people; but is that really the case with you? Can I reasonably believe or hope that you are all meet for this rest and felicity which I have been describing? It becomes you to be extremely and daily solicitous to know whether you are or not. Let me entreat each of you to ask your own conscience, as in the sight of God, am *I* one of his people? Have *I* chosen him as my God and my portion? Am *I* every day owning him as such, acknowledging my dependence upon him, and obligations to him; humbling myself before him for my unworthiness and guilt, and earnestly entreating his pardon, favour, and protection? Am *I* weary of sin, sensible of the corruptions of my own heart, and continually watching and praying that I may mortify and subdue them? Am *I* continually living by the faith of the Son of God, and looking to him for grace and strength sufficient for me? Do *I* prefer heaven to earth, and the rest of God's people above, to all the ease, gain, and pleasure which this world can afford? When the interests of time and eternity come in competition, do *I* readily and cheerfully make a sacrifice of those of time, to secure my better, my eternal interest? Yea, do *I* deliberately choose to submit to any pain, loss, or reproach, rather than offend God, wound my own conscience, or weaken my hope of immortality? Do *I* find in my heart a real correspondence to this hope? a prevailing love to the God of hope? to Jesus, who is our hope? a constant care to purify myself as Christ is pure, and to have my conversation in heaven? Let me ask myself further, as a pretty certain criterion, how stand I affected to the rest and work of God's sabbaths;

those blessed emblems and earnests of the sabbatism or holy rest above? If I do not look upon my sabbaths as the golden spots of time, and am not most solicitous to improve them, I can never be fit for the holy rest and work above. Bring your hearts, sirs, to the touchstone of such inquiries as these. To excite you to make diligent search, consider, that if you come short of this rest, you must be for ever restless and miserable. There is a rest remaining for God's people; but there is none for his enemies. There is "no peace to the wicked" at present, and there will be none hereafter. Rest, indeed, from the pains and sorrows of mortality they would like. They are sometimes glad to die, and even destroy themselves, through the anguish of a pained body or a wounded spirit. But though the grave hides them from the reproach of men, it doth not, cannot, hide them from the wrath of God. Though death makes the body insensible of pain, it gives no rest to the wounded spirit. They would indeed choose heaven when they die; that is, they would choose it as they would any other place, merely as a refuge from hell. But as a holy rest, a state of devotion and spiritual exercises, work, and enjoyment; this is disagreeable to their natures, unsuitable to their taste and relish, and therefore would be no relief to them. They expect to find rest when they quit the body; but alas! that is but the beginning of their sorrows. Being rebels against the law, the government, and the appointment of God, they cannot inherit his kingdom. Nothing remaineth for them but "a fearful looking for of vengeance and fiery indignation." God hath solemnly sworn that such persons shall never enter into his rest; and to have lost that happiness, and to have lost it for a little money or pleasure, for the indulgence of a sensual appetite or irregular passion, will be a most tormenting reflection to them, and for ever deprive them of rest. But besides this, they will be sent down to a place of torment, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" "where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." And can that be a state of rest, think you? So widely different are the states, the future, everlasting states, of God's people and his enemies! Let me earnestly entreat and solemnly charge you, therefore, that you fear, with a daily solicitude, "lest, a promise being left you of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Is there such a rest remaining for God's people,

4. *This should endear sabbaths to us.* I cannot omit to mention and enforce so natural a reflection from the text, as illustrated in the former discourse, though I have been so largely discoursing to you on the subject of sanctifying the Lord's day. God's people in heaven keep an eternal sabbath. They employ themselves in such acts and exercises as are sabbath business now; and they enjoy such blessings and consolations as are

sabbath enjoyments now. Lord's days, religiously observed, are an emblem of this rest; they tend to fit us for it, and give us delightful foretastes of its blessedness. Let us, then, never call that a drudgery, which is the employment of heaven, the work of angels and glorified spirits; which constitutes their rest and their joy. It is a sad sign of a carnal heart, a heart utterly unfit for heaven, when men dislike the work of the Christian sabbath. How can he be happy in quitting earthly cares and labours for ever, that cannot contentedly lay them aside for one day in a week? How unfit is he for the eternal sabbath, who is continually saying, "When will the sabbath be gone?" How can he relish an eternity spent in religious exercises, to whom a single day, or a few hours in a day, thus spent, is painful and irksome; who had rather be in idle company, at sport or amusement, or any where, than in the house of God; and dares rob the supreme Lord of his sacred time, to devote it to sin and folly? There cannot be a surer sign that men shall never enter into God's rest in heaven, than their profaning his day of rest on earth. Let us, my friends, "keep the sabbath from polluting it," and "call it a delight," and honour God upon it. Let us highly value and diligently improve our sacred days of rest, as types and anticipations of the eternal sabbath. So we shall find them; and have frequent reason to adopt the words of Jacob, and say of our religious assemblies, as he did of Bethel, "How dreadful," or "How solemn, is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."* Is there a rest remaining for God's people,

5. *This should reconcile them to the want of rest here.* It is an error, into which even the people of God are apt to fall, to entertain too low and unworthy thoughts of heaven, and to expect too much in and from this world. It is not indeed their portion, nor do they look for an entire freedom from troubles and perfect rest here; but they expect a greater freedom and more rest than Providence ever intended. The nature of the world, and their own circumstances, as creatures dwelling in frail bodies, attended with many imperfections, and connected with so many other imperfect creatures, forbid such expectation. This is a school of education and discipline for God's people; and it is his appointment that "through much tribulation they should enter into the kingdom." Afflictions are useful, to convince us that this is not our rest; to prevent our mistaking our resting-place, and taking up with something short of it. They are serviceable to keep us from wandering out of the way to rest, and to quicken our pace towards it. Let us not expect our rest here; it is not to be found in this world. We are here but pilgrims and strangers, and "have no continuing city." Nothing here below can afford us complete and lasting rest. We are

* Gen. xxviii. 17.

ready to expect it in this place, this circumstance, or this relation in life. We lay our heads down as on a soft pillow, and think with ourselves, Now we shall have some repose; but we find the pillow has thorns in it; or, if it appears quite easy and comfortable, it is suddenly snatched from under our heads; and the more securely we rested, the more violent is the stroke and fall, and the more grievous the disappointment. Let us learn wisdom by our frequent disappointments in the creature, and look more to God and to heaven. Let us say to our souls, amidst the anxieties and sorrows of life, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." And let us wait with patience the happy day that ends all our fatigues and distress. This life is like a tempestuous sea, and as soon might we count the waves of the sea in their succession, as the troubles of life. But our weary souls shall at length be landed on a peaceful shore. Let us, then, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God; for he will support our spirits under all their distresses, make these "work together for our good;" and with him (as the apostle expresseth it) "it is a righteous thing to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, and to them who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven."* Is there a rest for the people of God,

6. *Let us be active in the business of life while we are continued here.* A Mahometan general, after the fatigues of an action, being advised by a friend to take some repose, answered, "We labour to-day that we may rest to-morrow." We labour in this world that we may rest in that which is to come. This is the world for labour; the other for repose. "Six days shalt thou work, and on the seventh shalt thou rest," was the law of the earthly sabbath. And the law relating to the heavenly one is, Live to God, work his work, and then shalt thou rest with him. The rest "remaineth;" and it supposes previous labour. It is not given, but after a life of service, and as the gracious reward of it. An idle Christian is as great a contradiction as a drunken one. The people of God have great and important work to do, even to serve God and their generation: and in this they are to be employed through their whole lives. If, then, we desire rest hereafter, let us mind our work now; labour to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," aspiring after greater likeness to him and greater serviceableness to mankind. Let us labour after a more lively faith in this future rest, and make it the subject of our serious meditation. Let us compare it with the things of time and sense. A recollection of its superior excellency and eternal duration will preserve us from neglecting the work of God; from trifling in it, or making the infirmities of life an excuse for sloth and indifference. This will render our future rest much more com-

* 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

fortable. "The sleep of a labouring man," saith Solomon, "is sweet," peculiarly sweet; so will the rest of the active Christian be. Diligence in our Christian work, especially in our sabbath-work, will fit us for the enjoyment of that rest. It doth not, it cannot merit it; for when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. To be free from misery hereafter is more than we deserve; but the good Master we serve will bestow an immense reward for our poor services, and a reward proportionable to the activity and zeal with which we have performed them. Let us, then, "not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Let us be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." Lastly,

7. *Let the people of God long for the eternal sabbath, and be willing and desirous to enter upon it.* When Joshua had conducted the Israelites to the borders of Canaan, after their forty years' wandering in the wilderness, can you imagine that any of them would have been willing to enter into it, and have desired to wander longer in the wilderness? You would have thought them extremely foolish and ungrateful, had that been the case. The servant, after a fatiguing day, as Job expresseth it, "desireth the shadow of the evening, when he may rest; and the hireling looketh for the reward of his work."* We often long for the evening, after a tedious journey, some tiresome labour, or oppressing care; are glad to retire from the world, to undress, and seek the noblest cordial and restorative of nature, sleep. The good man longs for a Saturday evening, when he may have done with the world, gain a respite from its cares and hurries, that he may attend to things celestial, and engage in the blessed work of saints and angels. And yet how often are the people of God unwilling to enter into rest; to enter on an eternal sabbath. Methinks a soul that hath any lively hope of heaven, and knows and feels every day what a distracting, troublesome, ensnaring world this is, methinks he should cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God, when he summons him to a better; and not only so, but should rejoice in his dismission. But alas! this world hath too great an influence over us. We caress our enemy, and we hug our chains. Our faith in unseen things is weak, and many doubts and fears check the natural inclination of the renewed soul to its rest in God and heaven. These doubts and fears sometimes arise from the weakness of the animal frame; more frequently from the weakness of our faith, the want of more closely walking with God, and a more holy and circumspect behaviour; for want of looking more habitually and intensely on the things which are unseen and eternal. Let us guard against these things, and indeed against every thing that would weaken our hopes, or obscure our evidences; that so

* Job vii. 2.

we may triumph in the prospect of our rest as nearly approaching, and may "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Let all the people of God, and especially his aged servants, who have been long toiling with the cares, and groaning under the sorrows of mortality; who have borne the heat and burden of the day; let them rejoice that the shadows of the evening are drawing on, when they shall "rest from their labours;" and after a short night of repose in the grave, they will awake, in their complete persons, to an eternal day, yea, to an eternal sabbath. "Welcome, sweet day of rest!" should be the language of a dying Christian; "welcome to this reviving breast! welcome to these rejoicing eyes!" When diseases and infirmities, the harbingers of death, come upon them, by them God saith unto you, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." Let this be your language, "Oh that I had wings like a dove; then would I fly away and be at rest!"

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS:

OR

DEVOUT REFLECTIONS ON VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE;

DESIGNED TO ASSIST CHRISTIANS IN THEIR ATTENDANCE ON THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THEIR IMPROVEMENT OF IT.

"Satis me vixisse arbitrabor, et officium hominis implesse, si labor meus utilitatem legentibus ad vivendum afferat, quod est maxime necessarium, et aliquos homines ad iter cœleste direxerit."—LACTANTIUS.

"Where there is a prospect of being able in any instance to serve the cause of virtue and religion, I hope that it will always appear to me a sufficient inducement not to decline the attempt."—DEAN BOLTON.

PREFACE.

So many treatises of various kinds have been published concerning the Lord's supper, that it may seem unnecessary and superfluous to add to them. But it is to be considered, that most of them were written to explain the nature and design of that ordinance, and to suggest some general directions relating to an attendance upon it. There have been few tracts published, with an immediate and direct view to furnish devout communicants with proper subjects of meditation and reflection during and after this service. Some devotional pieces relating to it have been published, which have been excellent in their kind; especially Mr. Grove's. But as they are not founded on particular texts of scripture, which might bring to mind the principal thoughts suggested in them, it is to be feared that few Christians can so far retain them in memory, as to make a proper use of them, especially at the Lord's table. Some sacramental meditations on particular texts were published by Mr. Flavel. These are devout and instructive, and have been very serviceable to many: but they are now seldom to be met with; and being long, and branched out into too many particulars, cannot easily be retained and recollected.

The great number of sacrament books, as they are called, and the general regard which they have met with, are an evidence how desirous devout Christians are to have every assistance in their attendance upon this ordinance and their improvement of it. I have often heard many serious communicants, especially the young, lament the difficulty of fixing their thoughts upon some topic, suitable to that service, and adapted to assist their devotion and promote their future edification. They are lost in that variety which the institution itself suggests, or which are suggested to them by writers upon this subject. Perhaps there is nothing so much wanted in this view, as a treatise containing short reflections on select texts of scripture, which may, in a great measure, fix the thoughts to one point, and furnish at once materials for devout meditation, and some examples of it. This may be of singular use to young and less knowing and experienced Christians. It seemed very desirable to join hints of instruction and pious meditation together; and to suggest to an attentive reader how other texts and subjects may be turned into devotional reflections, resolutions, and addresses to God. One of these discourses or meditations may be read before an approach to the Lord's supper, and afterwards reviewed with those reflections and advices which follow it. The leading thoughts may, I hope, be remembered without much difficulty; as they naturally arise out of the text which is prefixed to it. Thus by a regular attendance upon the Lord's table, and the use of this and other helps, it may be hoped that Christians will attain a clear and comprehensive view of those weighty and interesting sentiments, which the institution was designed to suggest to the mind and to impress upon it. This work may be further useful to assist them how to recollect and improve the religious instructions which they receive every Lord's day from the pulpit, and the addresses of their own ministers at the Lord's table; if they will take pains to remember the principal heads and thoughts, and reflect and meditate upon them, in the manner here pointed out. This would be a most suitable exercise in their retirements on a Lord's day, and be attended with singular pleasure and lasting advantage. Those who have not yet partaken of the Lord's supper,

especially young persons, may find this work serviceable to them; by increasing their acquaintance with the gospel dispensation, and the privileges and duties of Christians; by raising and cherishing devout affections in their hearts, and exciting them to a regular and holy conversation. It may especially dispose them to join in this service, which seems so essential to the character of a disciple of Jesus, and which is admirably adapted to promote their establishment in religion, and to afford them those consolations and hopes, which he hath purchased for and bestoweth upon his obedient, consistent disciples. I have a further hope, that this tract may afford some instruction and consolation to those who may be necessarily detained from the house and table of the Lord, by the hand of Providence, and particularly by sickness or other personal afflictions. It may cheer their solitary and painful hours, and in some measure supply the want of ordinances. It hath in this circumstance been often useful to myself, and I wish and pray that it may be so to my companions in weakness and tribulation, with whom I tenderly sympathize.

The judicious Christian will not expect to find in these meditations the texts illustrated and the subjects handled as if they were sermons. They are intended only as short and general hints to assist his devout recollection. The plainest texts have been principally chosen, and those which furnish such divisions as are most natural and easy to be remembered. The different strains to be found in them may suit different tastes, and all be useful, through a divine blessing, to pious and humble minds. I hope the subjects here treated will appear agreeable to the nature and design of the Lord's supper. Though the texts do not directly relate to that institution, the thoughts which they suggest seem suited to it, calculated to make an attendance upon it useful, and promote the general edification of the Christian in the divine life. I have laboured after plainness and perspicuity in these meditations, that no pains may be necessary to understand them; while all is employed, and all little enough, to have the heart duly impressed with the sentiments contained in them. I have also studied brevity, that those serious persons, who have not their time at command, may have materials for their own devout reflections.

The great thing which I wish for all, who may peruse these meditations, is, that they may enter into the spirit of them; and have their understandings improved, and their hearts warmed and elevated and made better by them. I wish to fix on their memories such thoughts as may excite and maintain in their hearts affections and resolutions suited to the nature and design of the Lord's supper; and which may especially help them to improve it to practical purposes. These the ordinance was intended and is adapted to effect. These ought always to be kept in view in every attendance upon it, and in all our religious exercises relating to it. May the Lord prosper this humble attempt to serve the interests of his church, and promote the edification and comfort of all who may think proper to peruse it! May we all be extremely and constantly watchful, that we give no occasion for that mournful complaint of a judicious, lively, and serious writer; "Prayers, fasting, and sacraments are oftentimes made use of, not to improve us in virtue, but to supply the want of it; and to quiet the conscience under the most criminal gratifications of appetite and passion?"*

J. O.

Kidderminster, July 9th, 1777.

* Dean Bolton.

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATION I.

ROMANS XII. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

WITH such lively, affectionate, instructive words doth St. Paul begin the second part of his letter to the Romans. In the former part he had largely explained the nature and design of Christianity; especially the goodness of God in calling the gentiles into the fellowship of his church, and making them fellow-heirs with the believing Jews of all the privileges and hopes of the gospel. He begins this second part with an earnest exhortation to them, in consequence of these their privileges, to yield themselves to God. And here let us attend to the duty he urgeth, and the motives by which it is enforced.

I. *The duty which he very affectionately beseeches them to practise, was self-dedication; to give up their own selves to the Lord.*

"That you present your bodies to God." The body is, by a usual figure, put for the whole person. The soul in this state cannot be presented otherwise than as dwelling in a body. Nor can it be truly consecrated to God without employing the body for him. Nor, on the other hand, can the body be presented, as "a living sacrifice," otherwise than as it is animated and actuated by the soul. Another reason for the use of this expression may be, he had in the former part of the epistle, described the body as the source of sin and seat of lust; and the persons to whom he wrote had, like other heathen, been full of vile affections, and guilty of sensual and sinful practices. He requires them, therefore, to offer up themselves to God, to devote their whole selves to his service. This he styles "a living sacrifice." The Jewish sacrifices were first slain and then presented to God; and the right to the whole burnt-offering was transferred to him. Our bodies are not to be slain as a sacrifice to God; no-

thing would be more abominable in his sight. They are to be presented as a living sacrifice. This intimates that we are not to be content with bodily exercise, and the external forms of reverence and devotion; but that our souls are to be consecrated to God and employed for him. All the actions of the outward man are to be directed to his honour by the indwelling Spirit. They are also to be "holy sacrifices;" pure and spotless, as the beasts offered in sacrifice under the law were required to be. The body may be called holy, when it is consecrated to God and faithfully used in his service. If fleshly lusts be mortified; if we possess our vessels or bodies in sanctification and honour, use them to worthy purposes, and they are the ready instruments of the soul in that which is good; then they are a holy sacrifice, offered according to the will of God, and employed for him according to the maxims of his gospel. Thus are we to present, or consecrate, all our powers of body and mind to God. This supposeth a conviction that he hath an undoubted, unalienable right to us and our best services; to all those faculties and abilities which he hath given us, which he kindly continues to us, and by which we are capable of glorifying him. We are to guard against every thing that would dishonour our bodies and unfit them for the work of God; and be careful never to pervert and abuse what hath been consecrated to him. Let us consider,

II. *The motives by which the apostle urgeth this self-dedication.*

This, saith he, "is your reasonable service," greatly preferable to all the ritual services and offerings of the law; to all the carnal ordinances of the Jewish dispensation. It is devoting to God an intelligent creature, and not a beast. The rational powers are concerned and employed in such a transaction as this. It is also what highly becometh every reasonable creature. It is fit in itself; what no one, who useth his reason and understanding, can deny the equity and importance of. Can any thing be more reasonable and becoming than that those faculties and powers which we received from God, and which are continually supported by him, should be devoted to him and employed for him? Our bodies and spirits are his by many claims, and therefore he ought to be glorified with them. And nothing can be more irrational, unbecoming, and impious, than to alienate them from him. Further, he urgeth that this will be "acceptable to God." The great end which all Christians ought to have in view should be this, to be accepted of God and to secure his favour. Nothing is so agreeable to him, as to receive the devout homage and cheerful obedience of his intelligent creatures. For the righteous Lord doth and must love righteousness. The Jewish sacrifices were acceptable to

him, because he appointed them to be offered, and presenting them was calculated to answer many valuable purposes. Though there was no intrinsic excellency in them, God was pleased with the sincerity and devotion, the repentance and faith, with which they were presented. But nothing is so acceptable unto him, as when the whole man, which is the work of his hand and which he formed for himself, is devoted to him, and employed for him; employed to those ends for which it was formed and is preserved. Thus Christ's obedience to death is called "a sacrifice and offering to God of a sweet-smelling savour;" pleasing and acceptable in his sight. Once more, the apostle urgeth the many mercies which we have received from God, as a motive to this self-dedication, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God." And who can number them? Many mercies he hath bestowed upon us relating to our bodies. He hath made them capable of many pleasurable sensations; provided for their necessities, and given us a variety of objects for their entertainment and delight. He watcheth over them continually by day and night; generally secureth their health and ease; and preserves them from a thousand dangers. Yea, he hath redeemed them with the blood of his Son, made them the habitation of his Spirit, and intends to confer distinguished honour and lustre upon them at the resurrection. The blessings of social life, which the body is the instrument of relishing, lay us under additional obligations to present them to God. But his mercies to our souls make the argument still more forcible. He hath given us rational faculties, immortal powers. He hath made us capable of inquiring after him, of knowing and serving him; capable of tasting that unutterable delight which ariseth from the knowledge, the love, and the enjoyment of God, and the practice of our duty. He hath delivered us from the bondage of the ceremonial law, and all the costly sacrifices which that required. He hath brought us, who once were afar off, nigh to him; into the fellowship of his church. He hath favoured us with his word and ordinances, and granted us the influences of his Spirit. By these I trust he hath renewed and sanctified us, and is continually strengthening our graces and comforting us under the burdens and sorrows of life. Whatever particular supports, deliverances, and spiritual assistances we have received, they ought in this connexion to be devoutly recollected and acknowledged. All these mercies flow down upon us through the gracious intercession and mediation of his Son Jesus. What a constellation of mercies is here! How unsearchable the riches of Christ! and who can ever conceive what dignity and felicity God hath prepared for his people beyond the grave? Be engaged then, O my soul, by all these mercies, to comply with the apostle's affectionate entreaty and yield thyself to God. I come to this ordinance to view, to celebrate, and adore, that

mercy of mercies, Jesus Christ; to reflect upon the wonders of redeeming love; to show forth the death of Christ, by which my body and soul are redeemed; to remember the covenant he sealed with his blood; to profess myself his disciple and under the greatest obligations to live to him. And while I contemplate the death of Christ, the greatest mercy ever shown to guilty men, and adore the Father for his unspeakable gift, I would present my soul and body to him deliberately, heartily, entirely, and for ever.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been presenting our bodies and souls as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God. Let us often remind ourselves of this transaction. Let us never forget it: never retract what we have done with so much solemnity and pleasure. Instead of being willing to be released from our engagements to the Lord, let us remember them with thankfulness and act consistently with them. In order to that, let me exhort you, as the apostle doth the Romans (in the verse following his entreaty which we have been considering) that ye "be not conformed to this world." Have nothing to do with those sins, which you have renounced and expressed your abhorrence of. Be not conformed to any of the evil customs and practices of a wicked world, from which you profess to be separated. Let not their bad examples move you from your stedfastness, or abate that zeal and fervency in God's service which he requires of you; which is so reasonable in itself, and will be attended with such happy effects. Let the world act as it will, do you endeavour to be singularly pious, pure, sober, and benevolent, whatever censures or sneers you may meet with from it. Remember that they who neglect God, who are ungrateful for his mercies, who dishonour their bodies, and debase and injure their souls, are the most irrational creatures that can be. They forfeit the choicest good, lose the noblest pleasure, and sink both body and soul into hell. To confirm your resolutions for God, often take a close and serious survey of his mercies, and all that goodness which hath followed you all your days. Especially think daily on that astonishing mercy which you have received in and by Jesus Christ. Thus you will be ashamed to act an ungrateful, disingenuous part, and displease that God to whom you are infinitely obliged. Let your fervent prayers be daily directed to the Father of mercies, that he "would sanctify you wholly, and that your whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ." And may this and every other religious service prepare us to meet that awful day, not only with composure, but with joy.

MEDITATION II.

Psalm xxxv. 3.

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

It is the great and governing desire of every sincere Christian to be interested in and entitled to the salvation of God; or that final deliverance from sin and death, and that advancement to eternal glory, which most properly deserveth the name of "salvation." His next desire is, to have some comfortable evidence that he is entitled to it. In that view he may pertinently use this petition of David; especially when he commemorates the death of his Saviour, on which his hopes are principally founded. No doubt the psalmist here refers (as the whole psalm shows) to the danger he was in from Saul and his adherents. And it expresseth his desire, that he might have some comfortable assurance in his own mind, that God would deliver him out of all his dangers, and that he should not fall by his enemies, though he was in continual danger from them and fear of them. We, my brethren, have a greater interest depending than this of David; even the salvation of our souls; their deliverance from sin and its dreadful effects, and from the powers of darkness; and their being raised to perfect and everlasting happiness in heaven. Now God hath promised that he will be the salvation of all sincere Christians. Yet when they perceive their own weakness, the temptations of Satan, and the treacherous party within them, they are often exercised with painful doubts and fears, lest they should come short of eternal salvation. Their doubts arise, not from a disbelief of the divine promises, but a suspicion of their own integrity; whether they have been brought into, and continue in that state, to which the promises of salvation are made. Therefore they are desirous to have some satisfactory evidence. And this they expect and hope for, partly from close and frequent self-examination, and comparing their temper and conduct with the rules of the gospel; but chiefly from the gracious influence of the Spirit of God upon their hearts. For he sometimes exciteth a cheerful hope in the Christian, that he is an heir of salvation. In this view he prays with the psalmist, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

Undoubtedly God can say this to the soul, and raise in it a lively hope of salvation. He sometimes indeed keeps his servants in suspense, and suffers doubts and fears to prevail; that they may be humble and watchful, and have a due sense of the purity and holiness of God; that they may continue regular and diligent in the use of the means of grace, and maintain a constant solicitude to persevere. When they are

brought to this desirable state and conduct, God often gives them such evidences of their integrity, and their compliance with the terms of the gospel, as promote in them a comfortable persuasion that they are heirs of the heavenly inheritance. He reveals himself to them by his Spirit, as their God and Father in Jesus Christ. His Spirit (as the apostle expresseth it) "witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God," and heirs of salvation: and by this testimony of the Spirit, they are "sealed to the day of redemption." The Christian's hopes of salvation generally brighten according to his improvement in holiness, and his "path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Sometimes when he is under heavy afflictions, and therefore needeth some extraordinary assistance, light breaks in upon him on a sudden, and he hath a firm assurance that he is a child of God, and entitled to eternal glory.

Sometimes God maketh use of his providences, and often of his ordinances, to promote this sense of the divine favour. He enables Christians to bear their afflictions patiently and cheerfully, and to give up temporal blessings for faith and a good conscience. Thus he lets them know that they are upright before him, and that their religious principles, dispositions, and habits are firm and strong. The promises of his word, especially when opened and applied by his ministers, often dissipate the gloom which hangs over the mind, and give them good hope through grace. But the ordinance of the Lord's supper hath been peculiarly and greatly serviceable to give many devout partakers of it strong consolation. Here God hath made himself known to them. He hath given them the testimony of his Spirit to the sincerity of their repentance, faith, and obedience, and hath in effect said unto them, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee. I am thy salvation." In consequence of this they have left their burdens and fears behind, and gone on their way rejoicing.

Now nothing can be more desirable than this comfortable evidence that God is our salvation, and that things present and things to come are ours. For it is the highest relief to the humble Christian, and takes off the heaviest burden which he can feel. It affords him a delight which keeps pure and strong under great afflictions, and in the near approach of death. It also tends to purify and refine the soul, keepeth alive its holy desires and affections, and supports its firmest resolutions and endeavours to hold out to the end. Is God my salvation? (doth the Christian say.) Do I know upon satisfactory evidence that he is and will be so? therefore will I love and serve him with all the powers of my soul. Therefore will I patiently and cheerfully bear any afflictions at his hand. I will give up every thing at his command. I will endeavour every day to grow

more fit for that salvation which his grace intendeth for me. Thus will the cheerful expectation of the sincere Christian operate; according to that remark of St. John, "Every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure." Since then God can and often doth dispel the fears of his servants, and raise their cheerful hope; and since it is so delightful and advantageous to them when he doth so, it should be the great object of our desire, prayer, and endeavour, that God would say to our souls, that he is our salvation.

I have often some painful doubts and apprehensions (will many true Christians say) upon this most interesting point. But I trust that if he, who searcheth my heart, knoweth that it is sincere and entire in his service, he will give me some satisfactory assurance of it, and enable me to taste and feel the comforts of it, especially at this ordinance. I have some special reason to hope for such a display of his love here. For I view the representation of that body of Christ, by the wounding and bruising of which our transgressions are taken away. I view that blood by which salvation was ensured to humble penitent believers, and the everlasting covenant attested and sealed. I contemplate those sufferings by which the Captain of salvation was consecrated and made perfect, and so "became the author of eternal redemption to all them who obey him." And may the God of hope now fill me with all joy and peace in believing, and cause me to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

AFTER PARTAKING.

Let those words of the psalmist be now seriously considered (Ps. lxxxv. 1); "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly." This passage contains most important advices and cautions after the service in which we have been engaged; especially if we have any comfortable hope that God will be our salvation. Sincere Christians may very properly be styled God's "people," his peculiar people; as purified by his word and Spirit, and set apart for his service. They are his "saints," his holy people; sanctified by his grace and devoted to his glory. It becomes them to "hear" with the utmost attention and reverence whatever he speaks; and they ought also to hear it with pleasure and thankfulness; for he "speaketh peace" to them. His ministers are commissioned to speak comfortably to them, to animate and encourage them. He speaks peace to them by the seals of his covenant, and every serious commemoration of them, especially at this ordinance. He speaks it to them more directly and forcibly by his Spirit, and, in the language of David, "causeth them to hear joy and gladness." When God vouchsafes thus to speak to them, he

requires, and most reasonably expects, that they be grateful and obedient; that they be peculiarly watchful not to "turn again to folly." All sin is folly. It is acting directly contrary to the dictates of reason, the maxims of true wisdom, and our own best interests. But backsliding from God, especially after he hath spoken peace to us breaking our covenant engagements, is egregious folly, base ingratitude, abominable treachery. This will destroy all our comforts, darken our evidences, and weaken our hopes. It will bring a great reproach upon our Christian profession, and be a peculiar indignity to that Saviour whose dying love we have commemorated, and to whose service we have devoted ourselves. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have been obedient" and have tasted the pleasures of obedience, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," looking continually to God and depending upon him, "to work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

MEDITATION III.

2 Corinthians v. 14, 15.

For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

When we are approaching to the Lord's table, it is very desirable to have our thoughts directed to a subject which may suggest suitable reflections during the solemnity, and may likewise influence and regulate our future conduct. No subject is better adapted to answer both these purposes, than the words which are now before us; where we have a mournful representation of the state of mankind; an account of what Christ did for them; and the end he had in view therein.

I. *Here is the representation which the apostle maketh of the state of mankind.*

"We judge," or reason, "thus, that if one died for all, then were all dead." This is indeed a melancholy view; but it is of great importance to make it familiar to our minds. Men were dead; spiritually dead; under the condemning sentence of God's broken law, for "the wages of sin is death." "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are threatened to "every soul of man who doeth evil." They were likewise dead to all moral and religious purposes; under the power of their own corruptions, or, in the apostle's language, "dead in trespasses and sins;" and they were

in danger of eternal death. They were slain by the great enemy of souls, and there was no hope of recovery from themselves, or any other creature. Had not this been the case, as the apostle argues, they would not have needed a ransom, nor would Christ have died for them. This was the condition of all without exception, as the apostle again and again suggests in the words before us. It becomes us to lament this melancholy state, in which the world was, and to have our hearts deeply affected and humbled by the consideration of it; and especially to consider our own concern in it; then was I also dead. We have an account,

II. *Of what Christ did for mankind.*

"He died for all." You will observe that here, as in many other passages of scripture, the death of Christ is described as that event on which the stress of our salvation lieth. He gave himself as a sacrifice or atonement for our sins. His compassion and grace shine with peculiar lustre, when we consider him as making his soul an offering for sin, that the world through him might be saved; that we might be delivered from the penalty of God's holy law, which we had broken; and that the sentence of eternal death might be reversed. The apostle repeats it, that "he died for all." Not that all shall in fact obtain salvation by him; but salvation is to be preached and offered to all through him; by his authority and in his name; that there is sufficient merit in his obedience and death, and sufficient efficacy in his intercession, to save all of every nation, even the worst of sinners, who heartily receive him; and they who reject him and neglect this great salvation are self-destroyed. Their ruin is to be charged upon themselves. Let us observe again,

III. *The end which Christ had in view particularly in dying for us.*

It was, in general, that we might be saved; and that in order to this, we might live, not to ourselves but to him. It is easy to know what it is for men to live to themselves. We need only to look into the Christian world, and see how the generality live. To live to ourselves is to make our own wills the rule of our actions, and a present worldly interest the end of them. We live to ourselves, when the rules and laws of Christ do not direct and influence our conduct; when we entirely or chiefly mind earthly things, follow the course of this world, and do not live as he commandeth, and walk as he walked. We live to Christ, when we labour to know and to do his will; make his service and honour, and the advancement of his cause, the great end of our lives; when we strive and make it our ambition to be approved of him. Thus we are strongly engaged to live, because he died for us; gave us the clearest, noblest proof of his pity and

love. He rose again to ensure our happiness, and make way for our possessing eternal life. So that gratitude, duty, interest, all call upon us and oblige us to live to him. But alas! my brethren, how few Christians enter into the justice of this reasoning; at least how few appear to feel its weight! Where is that sweet, but powerful constraint, which such love is adapted to produce? How few are borne on by it, through all difficulties and oppositions, to lead such a life as the apostle did! How few, even of those who partake of this ordinance, and profess devotedness to Christ, appear fervently to love him! yea, how few are willing to deny their worldly interest, or even their humour, to serve him! Where shall we find a prudent, zealous, active Christian, who is constrained by this love; ambitious to adorn the gospel, and be doing something daily for the honour and interest of his Redeemer? Must we not each enter into this painful reflection, how much we have lived to ourselves, and how little to Christ? Surely if any thing can rouse us out of our indolence, awaken our zeal, and animate our resolution, it must be repeated views of the love of Christ. If we seriously reflect upon it, it will have a constraining influence. It will gently but powerfully draw our souls to love, obedience, and zeal; and we shall need no other, as we can have no nobler and more forcible attractive. In this view, the ordinance before us will appear a most wise and gracious institution. It tends to inspire sentiments of gratitude to our great Deliverer, as it brings to our remembrance our deplorable state as dead in sin, and the wonderful method of our recovery; and as it reminds us of the great obligations we are under to him who died for us and rose again.

Come then, O my soul, (let us each devoutly say) and contemplate this love. I was once dead; dead in sin, and condemned by the holy law of God. I hope, through grace, I am quickened and made alive; that I have a new and divine nature implanted in me, which leads and tends to God, and holiness, and heaven. I come to commemorate my deliverer with all thankfulness, and to adore the divine condescension and grace, that so illustrious a personage as Jesus Christ should submit to a most painful and reproachful death, to redeem such unworthy and sinful creatures. I come with an earnest desire to feel the constraining influence of that love which I now contemplate, and which was stronger than death in the most terrible form. I trust that it is this love which disposes and constrains me to consecrate, as I would now do, all my powers, abilities, and talents, my substance, time, and strength, and influence over others, to him who died for me and rose again.

AFTER PARTAKING.

"If I live in the flesh," saith the holy apostle (Phil. i. 20, 22), "this is the fruit of my labours," to serve Christ; "and

it is my earnest expectation and hope, that he shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death." We at once perceive that such sentiments, desires, and resolutions are perfectly reasonable; what we ought to cherish and manifest, in gratitude to him who died for us and rose again. We cannot but believe, that to act agreeably to them would render our lives, as they did the apostle's, honourable, useful, and happy. Our capacities, circumstances, and relations in life are indeed different and various; yet we have all work to do for Christ in our several stations and callings, as well as in those exercises which are more immediately religious. Let us carefully examine how far, and wherein, we have lived to ourselves; that we may maintain habitual humility, for our inordinate self-love and neglect of our Redeemer. Let us carefully examine how we may live to him more than ever through the future part of our life. We all may and ought to live to him. To this we are bound by the ties of gratitude; for he loved us and gave himself for us, and is still advancing our best interest. Our relation to him, expectations from him, and engagements to be his servants, all require this at our hand. And nothing will so effectually promote our noblest pleasure, our real advantage, and everlasting felicity, as to be faithful and active in his service, and persevere to the end. Let us then be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Nor can I leave with you a more forcible motive to this, than what is suggested in those words of the apostle, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

MEDITATION IV.

Romans vi. 15.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

It is a most important and instructive view, which the apostle giveth us of the gospel, when he calls it "a doctrine according to godliness." The great end and design of all its discoveries, precepts, institutions, and motives, is to make us holy. Though this is so plain and obvious, yet there have been some in every age who have perverted and abused it. There were some such even in the apostle's days; and therefore he frequently and solemnly warns the Christians, to whom he wrote, against such pernicious practices, and the false reasonings which lead to them. "We are not under the law," saith he, "but under grace; what then? shall we therefore continue in sin? God forbid." Because we are under a dispensation which exhibits pardon for the greatest offences, and gives us ample encouragement to hope for mercy, shall we practise sin or make light of it? Far be it from me to

encourage, and from you to allow yourselves in, such a conduct; Shall I say, I may repent when I will, and God will forgive men so merciful a Being will be easily reconciled? God forbid. Shall we who approach this table and join ourselves to the Lord in covenant to be his servants, presume to sin, because he is so favourable and indulgent to us? God forbid. We cannot be too careful to fill our minds with a deep and habitual abhorrence of such a conduct. Let us therefore consider it in these three views: as highly ungrateful to the blessed God; as greatly dishonourable to the gospel; and as most injurious to our own souls.

I. *Let us consider it as highly ungrateful to the blessed God.*

The law of Moses was given, because it was suited to the circumstances of the Israelites and the state of the world at that time. It was designed to answer many valuable ends, and especially to be a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, and prepare them for the reception of a more pure and spiritual dispensation. When these ends were answered, the gospel was published. It had been introduced by a variety of prophecies. The expectation of it had filled the hearts of the pious Jews with great pleasure. At length God sent forth his Son, to be the teacher and saviour of the world, and especially to die for their redemption. By his death the law was disannulled, and the interest of sin weakened. God's act of grace, his readiness to forgive penitents, was sealed by it. The operations of the Holy Spirit confirmed the evidence of the gospel. The apostles zealously preached it: they produced miraculous credentials that it was the truth of God, and confirmed their testimony by their death. This gospel was sent to the gentiles. It hath been supported in every age, and safely handed down to us. Now all this was the grace of God. We had no right, no claim, to such a favour. It was owing to the exceeding riches of divine grace. Is it not natural to argue from hence, that it must be the highest and basest ingratitude to pervert and abuse such a favour; to sin against God, when he hath thus commended his love, and displayed his tender mercies towards us? Nothing can be more unreasonable and more odious than this. Let us further consider,

II. *That it is greatly dishonourable to the gospel.*

It lays a foundation for one of the strongest objections against Christianity, which they, who judge of it by the lives of Christians and not by the New Testament, have urged; namely, that it subverts morality and lessens our obligations to holiness. It is the highest affront to Jesus Christ, who loved righteousness, and preached, lived, and died to promote it. It is acting as if we thought him the minister of sin; and that he came to release

us from the bonds of religion, instead of coming to strengthen them. It is injurious to the character and the comfort of Christian ministers, who preach "the gospel of the grace of God." And the more warmly they espouse and proclaim it, the more they will be grieved to see men abusing it. This conduct is dishonourable to the particular profession we make of the gospel, and the manner in which we celebrate its institutions. It is contradictory to the principles we avow, and that regard to Christ, as our only Lord and Master, on which we profess to act. It is dishonourable to all gospel ordinances, especially to the Lord's supper. There the grace of God is displayed in the most lively manner, and the covenant of mercy, attested and sealed with the blood of Christ, is set before us. We see the law disannulled and its curse removed. We see sin dethroned and subdued; grace triumphing in this method of reconciliation; and our faith in the promises of pardon, divine assistance, and eternal life, is confirmed. How careful then should we be, not to turn the grace of God into wantonness, and cause the name and the doctrine of God our Saviour to be blasphemed! Consider again,

III. *That this conduct will be most injurious to our own souls.* It will show that we have no ingenuity and gratitude; that either we do not understand the gospel, or that we grossly pervert it. It will destroy the divine life in us, harden the heart, and sear the conscience, till we become past feeling. It will naturally lead us to believe, that there is nothing in moral virtue, nothing in likeness to God and conformity to his holy will; and so subvert every good principle, disposition, and inclination in our hearts. This abuse of gospel grace will justly provoke God to give us up to strong delusions, and expose us to the sorest condemnation. What can deserve heavier punishment than "trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace?" Let us seriously consider these things, especially when we come to commemorate the death and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

O my soul, dost thou not at once see and feel the force of this reasoning, and tremble at the thought of such an abuse of the grace of God? I solemnly charge thee at the Lord's table, and with these memorials of the death of Christ before thy eyes and in thy hands, that thou never entertain for a moment a light and low thought of holiness; that thou never indulge for a moment a favourable thought of any sin, but resolutely check every rising inclination to the practice of it. This ordinance points out to thee thy privilege and thy duty: thy privilege, not to be under the curse and rigour of the law, but under grace; and thy

duty, to hate every false way, every sinful word, every evil thought. Thou seest here how thy pardon and deliverance from sin were obtained; even by the death of thy Saviour. Let sin therefore be the object of thy constant, settled aversion, and stand in awe even of the appearance of evil. Through divine help, it is my resolution, and shall be my care, to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." And I will daily apply to the throne of grace, that God would "keep me back from presumptuous sins, and suffer no iniquity to have dominion over me." With such desires and resolutions I would approach the holy table of the holy Jesus; and may God strengthen and confirm them by that service!

AFTER PARTAKING.

After the solemn transaction in which we have been engaged, let me recommend to your frequent and serious recollection those suitable words of the apostle, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. vi. 1). By the grace of God, he means the favours and blessings which we receive in consequence of the death and sacrifice of Christ. For this is an inference which he draws from what he had just said, that "God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." They receive the grace of God in vain, who entertain light thoughts of it, and do not consider it as a most important, necessary, and invaluable blessing, who do not reflect seriously upon its design and their own concern in it, and especially they who are not led by it to real, universal, persevering holiness. Nay it is worse than in vain; they receive it to their own condemnation, which will be aggravated by all the seriousness, solemnity, and pleasure with which they at first received it, and have often commemorated it. Let me beseech you then, as a worker together with Christ, and a friend to your best, your eternal interest, by every weighty, solemn, endearing consideration, that you guard against such a neglect, such an abuse, of the grace of God. We beseech you, by a regard to the credit of your holy profession, and the sacred cause which you thus publicly espouse. We beseech you by a regard to the comfort and encouragement of your ministers, who are working and labouring continually for your good. We beseech you by the holy angels, who are witnesses of your vows, and will be the witnesses of your behaviour. We beseech you especially by our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved you and gave himself for you; whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and whose grace you know, and profess to adore and trust. We beseech you above all, by the greatest and best of beings, who is rich in mercy, and hath displayed and magnified his grace to you who otherwise would have been condemned and miserable

for ever. We beseech you by a regard to the comfort, peace, and happiness of your own souls, that you do not receive it in vain. Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel which you profess, and on which your hopes are built. Labour to walk worthy your holy profession, and suitable to the design of that grace which you have received. If you thus comply with the terms of the covenant, its great and inestimable blessings will be yours. Surely they are worthy of your most diligent labour and most resolute self-denial to secure them; for "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him."

MEDITATION V.

JOSHUA XXIV. 22.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

JOSHUA, just before his death, was endeavouring to impress and fix upon the minds of the Israelites a firm determination to adhere to the worship and service of Jehovah, the God of Israel. They professed in the strongest terms their resolution to serve the Lord. But Joshua, knowing their fondness for idolatry, and the many temptations to it with which they would be surrounded, is here labouring to bring them under the most solemn engagements. In order to this, he reminds them of the great obligations they were under to Jehovah, their God. Impressed with this, they repeat their resolution to serve him. Joshua assures them there was no need of witnesses in this case. Their own consciences, their profession and engagements, would all join and condemn them, if they proved treacherous. "Ye are witnesses against yourselves," and need no other. To this they readily agree; "We are witnesses." We shall expect divine corrections, and shall acknowledge the justice of them, if we prove unfaithful.

Our approach to the Lord's supper is a public, solemn acknowledgment of our resolution to be the Lord's, and to serve him; to worship him reverently and sincerely, and to obey all his commands. It is in effect saying we are witnesses against ourselves if we do not. We there testify our allegiance to God as our master and Lord. We declare our resolution to have nothing more to do with the service of sin and Satan. We renounce allegiance to the world, and publicly profess that we will "not follow a multitude to do evil," but be "blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

We profess ourselves under subjection to the authority and the laws of Christ; and avow our determination to be governed by them in the whole of our conversation. We acknowledge, by that ordinance, that we are witnesses against ourselves, if we act contrary to this determination. We fix upon our own consciences as accusers, if we do not sincerely serve him; and they are generally faithful and dreadful accusers of those who act contrary to their dictates. After such a transaction, we cannot with the least justice complain that God deals hardly with us if he testify his displeasure against our unfaithfulness; if he abhor, reject, and punish us. Is it not reasonable, when the blessings which he promiseth are so great and glorious, that we should thus engage to be witnesses against ourselves, if we violate the conditions on which they are promised? Our fellow-Christians, who join with us in this service, the holy angels, Jesus the master of our assemblies, yea the omniscient and righteous God himself, are all witnesses. But our own souls will be the first to convict us. Shame and confusion will for ever cover us, if we prove false and disobedient; conscience will bring to our remembrance the instances in which we have opened our mouths to the Lord and have gone back; and they will shame, grieve, and confound us for ever. Let this be a caution to thee, O my soul, that what thou art now about to do be done in sincerity, as in the presence of God and my own conscience. Let it make me solicitous not to be "rash to utter any thing with my mouth before the Lord," but what my heart deliberately approves and consents to. Let me now come and join myself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten, and be a witness against myself, if I forsake the service of my God.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When we have been engaged in this solemn transaction, and have declared our resolutions to serve the Lord, let us attend to the exhortation of Joshua to the Israelites (v. 23), "Now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your hearts unto the Lord God of Israel." The first thing necessary, in order to our being the faithful servants of God, is to remove all rivals, and renounce all competitors; to put away every sin; all criminal, dangerous lusts and pleasures; especially covetousness, which is idolatry; and to say with penitent Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" You have had to do with them too long already. You have dishonoured the holy God, your rational natures, and your Christian profession too long already. You have suffered enough by this absurd and sinful conduct. Let us narrowly search our hearts, that no idol be left there; no business, pleasure, no sensual inclination, no relative or friend, that may usurp the place of God; and let us resolve to be wholly his. Let us likewise incline our hearts

to the Lord God of Israel; bend them to his authority and will; and use all our power over them, that his service may be our daily business and our daily joy. Pray also with David, that God would "incline your hearts to his testimonies, and not to covetousness." And guard diligently and daily, that nothing draw your hearts from that glorious Being to whom you have solemnly devoted yourselves. Joshua left Israel in this good mind; under the influence of these excellent resolutions. But after his death they quickly forgot them. And thus shall we act, if we place too much confidence in our own strength; if we do not watch and pray every day, and labour to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. May God, and Christ, and holy angels, your fellow-Christians, and your own consciences, be all witnesses for you, that your conversation is becoming the gospel. The concurrence of so many witnesses will be a source of unspeakable honour and joy. May God confirm every pious purpose of our hearts, and make us faithful unto death, that we may obtain the crown of life!

MEDITATION VI.

Matthew ix. 12.

Jesus said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

This is the reason which Christ gave for eating with publicans and sinners, for which he was censured by the Pharisees. It intimates to us that sin is the sickness and distemper of the soul, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only physician who can restore it to health. May we not from hence naturally take occasion to consider the Lord's supper, as one of the most important and useful of those means, which Christ hath appointed for the establishment and increase of the spiritual health of his disciples? By entering into this thought, we shall see the excellency of that ordinance; with what views we ought to attend it; and to what purposes we should improve it. Our great business at the Lord's table is to contemplate the sufferings of Christ, and show forth his death. And if we do this with fixed and serious spirits, it will tend to promote the health of our souls, and increase their vigour and activity in the service of God. Let us then consider,

In the sufferings of Christ we see the evil of sin: how odious it is in the sight of God, and how greatly and justly he is displeased with it. We see what mischief it hath occasioned to rational beings; how it hath defiled, disturbed, weakened, perverted, and ruined their immortal spirits. When we consider that Christ bore our sins, and suffered so much pain and shame

on this account, it must certainly give us a lively idea of their malignity, increase our abhorrence of them, and our earnest desires and endeavours to be set free from their guilt and power.

In this ordinance we likewise see the method of cure; the sufferings of Christ. Here we fix our eyes on these emblems; and faith is directed to a wounded, bleeding, dying Saviour, by whose stripes we are healed; by whose blood we obtain redemption. If we have any sense of his great love, any workings of gratitude and affection to him, his procuring us health and peace at so expensive a rate will excite us to devote to him those powers which he hath rescued from sin and ruin, and to serve him with all vigour and cheerfulness of heart.

The contemplation of this method of obtaining health and salvation is admirably adapted to promote our progress in holiness. It shows us that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that he is so holy a being, that there must be a change in polluted, degenerate hearts, before they can become the objects of his favour. And as his grace hath contrived this method of recovery, we may rest assured that he will give us all needful assistance in the use of it, and make it effectual to promote our spiritual health and vigour. This ordinance tends to weaken and remove the diseases with which our souls are affected, and which in the best of us are not perfectly cured. Covetousness, and the inordinate love of present things, is an evil disease, which cleaveth fast unto us. When we see such an example of contentment and moderation in Christ, and how cheerfully he submitted to poverty, shame, and pain, it will abate our fondness of the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life. It will show us that these things are by no means necessary to our happiness, but on many accounts dangerous to our spiritual health and peace. Thus, by the cross of Christ, the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world. And on that account we have reason to glory in his cross. Pride is still working in our hearts. Now what tends more to mortify it than to consider how many infirmities yet remain in us, that every degree of spiritual health which we enjoy is from divine grace in Christ Jesus, and that for our health and salvation he became obedient to death? What can be a better cure for impatience, fretfulness, and discontent, than contemplating the low circumstances and various sufferings of Christ? He pleased not himself, endured the contradiction of sinners, and the pain and shame of the cross; and hath "called us to patience, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." By this ordinance we are excited to obedience, as the most acceptable return for divine love, and as that to which we are bound by every solemn engagement. We are here likely to feel the powerful influence of the love of Christ, constraining us to live unto him. We see, at this ordinance, how we obtain those influences of the Spirit

which are necessary to make us whole and healthy; namely, by the sufferings of Christ. He was made a curse for us, that we might enjoy that great blessing, the promised Spirit. Here we have much encouragement to expect his continued assistance, in order to cleanse us from all filthiness, to enable us to mortify the deeds of the body, and to strengthen every good principle and disposition in us. Agreeably to this, it hath in fact been found that this ordinance hath greatly contributed to the cure of diseased hearts, and to the vigour of spiritual health.

Think then, O my soul (let us each say), what ample, gracious provision is made for thy recovery and salvation. Think of the happiness of having a cure begun and carrying on. Think how far this deliverance extends; even to raise thee to that world where thou shalt be for ever free from all thy disorders, and all the unhappy consequences of them. Consider how this is accomplished; even by the abasement and agonies of the Son of God. Think closely on what he felt, and then judge whether the remembrance of it ought not to awaken thy tenderness and gratitude. Think how many foolishly and madly reject this method of cure, while thou hast been brought by divine grace to make use of it. Be thankful on thy own account, and be thankful for others. Rejoice that such a remedy is offered to all who enjoy the gospel, and that so many have received benefit by it. Rejoice that so many are perfectly cured and arrived safe at the heavenly Zion; and that so many more are under cure; that they feel the regularity, harmony, and health of their souls increasing, and have so joyful a prospect of complete felicity; and all through the blessed Redeemer. Let his love fill thy heart and employ thy tongue. And for ever, and with the warmest gratitude, adore his Father and God, and thine, by whom this provision is made for thy restoration to health and advancement to eternal glory.

AFTER PARTAKING.

"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" said our Lord, concerning the ten lepers whom he had restored to health, only one of which returned to give him thanks (Luke xvii. 17). It intimates how base and abominable their ingratitude was, after they had received a perfect and instantaneous cure of so dreadful a disease by his power and compassion. I hope we have been thankful for the means of spiritual health; that our souls have been rising in gratitude to our great Deliverer, and renewing their resolutions to serve him with all that health and vigour of soul which his skill, power, and grace have restored to us. Let us proceed with holy caution. The seeds of moral disorders still remain, and sin dwelleth in us. We have many bad examples around us, which are infectious. Satan ever watches to gain an advantage over us.

Let us look well to ourselves, and guard our hands and tongues, our eyes and thoughts, lest we contract fresh diseases, and suffer again the agonies of a wounded conscience. Let us live by faith in Jesus Christ, keep ourselves under his care, diligently follow his prescriptions, and earnestly and daily implore the purifying, strengthening, quickening influences of his Spirit. And then God is faithful, who will establish us and keep us from evil; and "having begun the good work in us," the cure of our spiritual diseases, "he will perform it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

MEDITATION VII.

Psalm cxvi. 7.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

One would think that these were the delightful words of a soul just arrived at the heavenly world; looking back on the many difficulties he had surmounted, and the many dangers he had escaped; looking round on the blessed society to which he was admitted, and the glory with which he was encompassed; and looking forward to the prospect of an everlasting abode in that world of happiness. And, indeed, wherever a soul is led to say this sincerely and devoutly, with a due sense of the goodness and all-sufficiency of God, its heaven is already begun. This is a proper subject of our meditation at the Lord's supper; as it naturally leads us to consider, how bountifully God deals with his servants, and how reasonable it is that they should return to him and delight themselves in him.

I. *Let us reflect how bountifully God deals with his servants.*

The poorest Christian in the world hath reason to acknowledge this. Particularly he pardons all their sins. He takes the burden of guilt and fear from their minds. And that he might do this in the most honourable and gracious manner, he appointed his own Son to become a sacrifice for them. Thus he gave a public testimony of his displeasure against sin, and prevents his act of grace from being abused, and the purity of his law disregarded. His Son came to seal that covenant, in which pardon and peace are offered to penitent believers. And now God is merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembers their iniquities no more. In consequence of this, pain, sickness, and death are no longer a curse, but rather a blessing, as they promote the seriousness, health, and vigour of the soul. Further, God deals bountifully with his servants by communicating

his Spirit to them, as a Spirit of supplication, teaching them to pray, and so assisting their devotions that they become comfortable and edifying. He is bestowed as a Spirit of adoption, to bear witness with their spirits that they are God's children, and to fill them with lively and cheerful hope. As a Spirit of purity he enables them to mortify the deeds of the body, to assert and maintain the superiority and dominion of the soul over the appetites and inclinations of the flesh. As a Spirit of love, he makes them to abound in kind affection to one another and to all men. As a Spirit of consolation, he silenceth the tumult of grief and fear which sometimes ariseth in their breast, and fixeth them in a state of tranquillity. He brightens the evidences of their title to a better world, and causeth them to abound in hope. God takes the holy soul under his paternal care. He acknowledges the relation of a Father, and will bestow on his children the most valuable favours, and suffer them to want no good thing. "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for them, will with him also freely give them all things." Having bestowed upon them this unspeakable gift, he cannot think any thing too good for them. And, finally, he will at length bestow upon them eternal glory. He hath given them the promises, the assurances, and the earnest of it. He hath advanced his own Son, their head and forerunner, to a state of the highest dignity and felicity, and they shall at length behold and partake of his glory. Here they have but a taste of divine bounty; in the other world all its stores shall be opened, and the soul filled to the utmost of its capacity. Thus bountifully God deals with them.

II. *Let us now reflect how reasonable it is that God's people should return to him and delight themselves in him.*

Who so well deserves your high regard? Do you delight in creatures, in which there is any thing amiable and lovely? And will you not rest and delight in God? Is there sweetness in a drop, and none in the Fountain of good? Doth a faint ray of benevolence engage your regard, and shall not the whole glory of the Father of lights? Whatever we are or have is owing to his undeserved bounty. We are each indebted to him for numberless benefits. To whom then should we return, in whom then should we rest and rejoice but in him? Here alone we shall find real solid pleasure. Here alone we can enjoy ourselves; and without this rational, sublime self-enjoyment, were all the treasures of the earth in your possession, and all its princes your devoted servants, you would be mean and miserable creatures. Thus alone can you enjoy your God, and taste that pleasure which ariseth from a sense of his favour, and the expectation of his everlasting mercy. Without this devout regard to God all your religion is vain, all your hopes deceitful.

In this consists the very life of heaven. The heaven of a rational creature is being fully conscious of the approbation of the great God, and being conformed to his image. A man might as soon relish the beauties of nature without the sun, as the glory of heaven, unless his heart be possessed and filled with these devout regards to the Father of lights. I hope the Searcher of hearts knoweth that you are each, with sincerity and affection, saying, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." I would approach the sacred table with my heart full of gratitude to God, that he allows me to repose myself in him; to delight myself in the essential perfections of his nature, and especially in his bounty and goodness towards me. I would rejoice in Christ Jesus, by whose blood I, who was once afar off, am brought nigh. He hath given me the most amazing display of the divine bounty. He hath set before me the brightest example of an entire devotedness to God, and the highest delight in him, even in the most distressing circumstances of life. I would approach this ordinance to renew my view, and taste of the bounties of my Father and God; to have his love cherished and strengthened in my heart, and to repeat the dedication of myself to him, and the exercises of delight in him.

AFTER PARTAKING.

It is now proper to renew our devout acknowledgments of the bounty and kindness of God, and consider how we may most effectually preserve this grateful, pious disposition in our hearts. Let us renew our devout acknowledgments of divine bounty and goodness, as he causeth it at this ordinance to abound to us. He hath displayed and illustrated that attribute which is the supreme glory of his nature, and is assisting our faith and strengthening our gratitude by these emblems. If he hath taught us to seek our rest and happiness in him, the warmest praise becomes us; for by the grace of God we are what we are. How many painful struggles have we had with our earthly hearts, before we could bring them to take such a devout complacency in God. Let the desire of our souls be to him, and let him have the first place in our affection, who hath dealt so bountifully with us. Let us often contemplate his perfections, as displayed in the world about us. Let us trace that almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and inexhaustible goodness, which shine in his works. See what amazing order, harmony, and variety there are in them. Let us observe the regard he hath shown to sinful man, and the bountiful provision he hath made for his support and comfort. He made the human soul for himself. He implanted in it a sense of good and evil, and a power of reflecting upon itself and its own actions, compared with his law, that it might be uneasy till it returned to its God, the centre of its felicity and joy. Let us delight to reflect on the boun-

tiful provision of his gospel, and the amazing discovery of his grace and mercy therein. He there "commendeth his love to us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us." Keep up a view of a bleeding, dying Saviour, and thence learn and feel how good the Lord is. Think much of the everlasting covenant which his blood hath sealed, and the promises and blessed hopes which it contains. Finally, let us pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to mould our hearts to the devotional temper of the psalmist, and to shed abroad the love of God in them. Our heavenly Father hath promised to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him, and never doth he deal more bountifully with us than when he fills us with his Spirit. If we closely meditate on this subject, and abound in such devout addresses, we shall see more and more of the excellency and glory of our covenant God. We shall be so sensible of our obligation to his bounty, that we shall be ashamed and humbled that our love is so languid, and our returns for his favours so unsuitable to their greatness and excellence. By such devout exercises we shall be led to long for that blessed world where we shall know more of God and his bounty and grace than we can here do; enjoy his favour without interruption, and be fixed for ever near to the centre of perfection and happiness. No sooner shall we arrive at that world, but, with hearts full of rapture, we shall be disposed to say, as surely no words are more suitable to such an advancement, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

MEDITATION VIII.

Psalm xvi. 2.

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.

When David was in distress, ready to doubt whether he had in sincerity dedicated himself to Jehovah, and whether God had accepted the surrender, he reminds his own soul of the solemn transactions which had passed between it and its God. Then his doubts began to scatter, his comforts to return, and his faith to triumph. The words, "O my soul," are not in the original, but are properly supplied. For he evidently designs to remind himself of his covenant transactions with his God. Let us consider the meaning and import of the expression, and with what temper we should adopt it at the Lord's table.

As to the meaning of the expression; it is evident that David acknowledgeth God's property in him and reasonable claim to his best service. He acknowledgeth God as his Lord and master, whom he was bound to serve and obey, and to whose honour he was to consecrate all his powers, substance, authority, and influ-

ence. It is the language of choice and desire; preferring God to every other being, deliberately choosing him as his portion, and expressing his willingness to sacrifice all other interests to his. It implies a persuasion, that God was infinitely good and merciful, and ready to accept the surrender. He had chosen Israel as his people: they had chosen and acknowledged him as their God. David had done this for himself, and solemnly entered into covenant with the Lord. In this time of difficulty he repeats the acknowledgment and renews the surrender, as an encouragement to his own heart to expect the divine favour, and as a motive to diligence and perseverance in his service. Let us thus seriously recollect what professions we have made of this kind, and what engagements we are under; how often we have said to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord;" that we may see whether our behaviour hath been suitable to such professions and obligations, and with what disposition we should renew the acknowledgment. Nothing surely can be more reasonable than that it should be repeated, frequently and seriously repeated; for we are in danger of forgetting it, though the profession hath been made with the greatest solemnity. The impressions produced by such acknowledgments quickly wear out. Worldly concerns and pleasures are apt to efface them. We suffer a sense of the divine favour and of our obligations to grow weak and languid, and forget those duties to which we should be quickened and animated by them. We are also exposed to many temptations and afflictions; and they are sometimes so formidable, tedious, and heavy, that it is hard to believe that Jehovah is our Lord; that we have any relation to him and interest in him, or ought to entertain any comfortable expectation from him. To repeat this profession and acknowledgment with seriousness and solemnity, tends to strengthen our faith, and give us clearer and more delightful conviction of his kindness towards us. It will likewise make us more sensible of our duty, and more attentive to the discharge of it. It will recall our roving thoughts, bring our wandering spirits back to God, their rest and happiness. It will animate us under every suffering, give us a lively taste of the powers of the world to come, and be a happy preparative for that state, where God will be the ever present joy and everlasting portion of his servants. When we devoutly repeat this acknowledgment, we shall take a fresh view of the blessings connected with an entire devotedness to God. We shall see such a value, suitablenesss, and excellence in them, as will engage us to pursue them with unceasing diligence, and cheerfully to give up every thing that would render us unworthy of and unfit for the possession of them.

There is no time more proper to repeat such a declaration, and impress our minds with the importance and advantage of it, than at the Lord's table. There we commemorate the everlasting covenant, in which God hath promised to be our God; and the

blood of Jesus, by which it was attested and sealed. In that covenant the Lord engageth to pardon, assist, accept, and save us, upon our sincere repentance, faith, and obedience. We profess our faith in the death and sacrifice of Christ, by which God reconcileth a guilty world to himself, and becomes the God of those who were once afar off, and were not his people. We drink of that wine which represents the blood of Jesus. By that blood we are brought nigh to God, admitted into so endearing a relation to him, and have a claim to all the inestimable blessings of the everlasting covenant. In this view let us partake of the ordinance with fixed and grateful hearts, and sincerely and cheerfully renew our devotedness to God, saying to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord," and in effect declaring to all about us that we are and ever will be the Lord's.

AFTER PARTAKING.

Let us now take a serious review of what we have been doing, and each adopt the language of David, "O my soul, thou hast again said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." I entirely approve what I have done. Wouldst thou, my soul, unsay it, recall thy engagements, and break the bonds thou art under to be the Lord's? No, "thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render thanks unto thee." I would be thankful to divine goodness that admits me to such a privilege as this; which allows a sinful worm of the dust to lift up its head and say, Lord, thou art mine. It transports even the angels to enjoy such a privilege. And shall not such a mean, polluted, guilty creature as I am, adore the grace which permits me to use such language? I would acknowledge divine goodness which hath inclined me to say this. Though nothing can be more reasonable, delightful, and advantageous than thus to avouch the Lord for our God; yet so worldly are we, so much under the influence of flesh, and sense, and present things, that we are ready to say to almost every thing else but God, Thou art my Lord and my portion. I praise the Lord, who hath directed my thoughts to himself, and fixed them upon him; who hath united my roving heart to fear his name, and taught me to value, desire, and rejoice in his favour above every thing else. I would humbly acknowledge my unworthy behaviour to him, notwithstanding so many obligations and engagements. I have said, often said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. But have I acted accordingly? Have I loved him with that warmth, served him with that zeal, appeared on his side with that resolution, which I ought to have done? Alas! I see a thousand defects; and would mourn over my past conduct as having been very ungrateful and treacherous to my God. I have used him in many instances as I should have been ashamed to have used an earthly superior, benefactor, and friend. I would renew my resolutions to act better for the future. I have, I hope, formed them deliberately,

and in an humble dependence on divine grace, without which I expect no steadiness in them. Let me often remind my soul of what hath now past. Am I in danger of neglecting any branch of duty through business, pleasure, idleness? Let me recollect what I have now said unto the Lord, and act consistent with it. Am I tempted to engage in criminal pleasures, or to exceed in lawful ones? "O my soul, thou has said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;" and wilt thou suffer other lords to have dominion over thee, obey other masters, and exchange rational, sublime, divine pleasures for mean and vile ones? Art thou in danger of following the world too eagerly and loving it immoderately? And wilt thou who hast solemnly said to the Lord, Thou art my Lord, say the same to mammon, and indulge that covetousness which is idolatry, or make a god of the belly?

Are we in affliction? have we lost or are we likely to lose any earthly comfort? that is a time to repeat the acknowledgment. "Thou hast said to the Lord, Thou art my Lord:" in thee I have all things. With thy favour I can never want and be miserable. Thou canst and wilt support and comfort me; make up my earthly losses, and teach me to glory in tribulation. Finally, do we feel the sentence of death in ourselves? there is no time more proper to repeat the acknowledgment, "Thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;" my God whom I have sincerely loved and served; to whom I have often committed my soul through Christ; and I would do it again with gratitude, hope, and joy, when flesh and heart are failing.

Let us thus, in every circumstance of life and death, remember our covenant transactions, how faithful he is who hath promised; and cheerfully expect the blessings which he hath promised. If you have sincerely said, and are saying to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord," and acting agreeable to and consistent with such a declaration, let this be your comfort in every circumstance of life and death, that "he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

MEDITATION IX.

Galatians iii. 1.

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

I have no doubt but when we have been reading and hearing of a crucified Saviour, and especially when we have been attending the ordinance of the Lord's supper, our hearts have been often much affected. They have been filled with shame and godly sorrow for sin; with love to our Redeemer and a resolution to grieve and offend him no more. In such circumstances

we are ready to conclude that we shall never forget our suffering Lord, never be disobedient to his commands, and never act inconsistent with the resolutions we have formed. Yet such is our weakness, such the remaining corruptions of our hearts, and so many the temptations of the world about us, that we too soon lose the serious impression, and forget our solemn engagements. Though this is greatly to be lamented, it is not much to be wondered at; considering that it was the case even with some of the first Christians. It was so with many in the churches of Galatia, whom St. Paul thus expostulates with, "O foolish Galatians," &c. As these words point out to us our danger and our duty, they may profitably be made the subject of our meditation at this service. And they suggest to us three thoughts: that obedience to the truth is the great thing expected from Christians; that the sight of a crucified Saviour is a powerful motive to this obedience; and they must be under some wretched, malignant influence, who are not led to obedience by it.

I. *The great thing expected from Christians is obedience to the truth:* i. e. to the gospel of Christ, which is called the truth.

God's word and will as published by Christ is truth. His sayings are all faithful and true, and worthy of all acceptation. Obedience to the truth comprehends the whole of our Christian duty; a subjection to all the precepts, laws, and institutions of Christ. It is not sufficient to know, and believe, and profess the gospel. We must heartily submit to it and steadily abide by it. But the apostle seems here to refer to one grand and leading truth, namely, that we are justified by faith in Christ without the deeds of the law. We are humbly to submit to the righteousness of God, and receive Jesus Christ, that we may be justified and saved from wrath by him. And this faith in him, when it is sincere, will, as the apostle plainly intimates in many passages of this epistle, be a principle of holy obedience to every command, and produce all the fruits of righteousness. The apostle further intimates,

II. *The sight of a crucified Saviour is a powerful motive to obedience.*

"Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth before your eyes crucified among you." Christ was crucified, you well know, at Jerusalem, not in Galatia. And the persons to whom St. Paul wrote could not have been witnesses of his death. Therefore the expression must refer to something common to all Christians; to us as well as to them. Christ is evidently set forth; described to us, written down before our eyes (as the words signify), and as clearly seen as what is painted or written in large and legible characters; yea, as if we had been actual spectators

of his death. Christ crucified is set forth before our eyes in the gospel history. We read the account of his sufferings in those authentic records. The ministers of that gospel often set this event before us. The doctrines of the cross, the atonement made, and the salvation procured by the death of Christ, are continually preached to us. But I apprehend the apostle principally refers to the Lord's supper. This ordinance was instituted to show forth the death of Christ, and the nature and design of it; that we might publicly avouch our faith in it and dependence upon it. The bread broken and the wine poured out represent to us, in a clear and distinct view, the crucifixion of our Lord, the manner in which he was wounded, pierced, and slain. The sight of this hath a strong influence to promote obedience. For it shows us the evil of sin and disobedience, the greatness of God's displeasure against it; and so it addresseth to and alarms our fears. It displays the riches of divine compassion and love; and so addresseth to our sense of gratitude and ingenuity. And it sealed the everlasting covenant of pardon and life; and thus addresseth to our desires and hopes of heaven. So that we may naturally conclude, according to the apostle's observation,

III. *That it must show the greatest folly and madness not to be influenced by such a sight to obedience.*

Well might he call them "foolish Galatians," and ask them "who had bewitched them?" They had acknowledged the gospel to be true, by professing it and receiving the Lord's supper. It was therefore folly to act inconsistently with such an acknowledgment. Yea, it was worse than folly. One would think they were "bewitched," under some fatal enchantment, deprived of the use of their faculties, and forcibly seduced contrary to the principles of reason and the views of their own interest. They were acted upon by Satan, or some other subtle adversary, to contradict their Christian principles, profession, and hopes. This was the apostle's convincing expostulation with the Galatians.

And now, my brethren, what must we say to these things? Have we no concern in them? Must we not each lament that in this respect we "have played the fool and erred exceedingly;" and wonder what could influence us to neglect a hearty, entire obedience to the gospel of Christ; what could ever bewitch us to sin against God, to pierce his Son, to come short of our duty in so many instances, and wrong our own souls? I cannot recollect my past conduct this day without blushing at my own folly. I am grieved that I should ever suffer Satan, that old and cunning serpent, the world, that vile enchanter, and my own heart, that subtle deceiver, to seduce me from the paths of obedience.

I have often thought that the view which I have had of a

crucified Saviour at this ordinance would effectually and for ever have secured my fidelity to him. But alas! it hath not. I may therefore justly mingle repentance and godly sorrow with all my hopes and joys. Is there one of us who hath not reason to adopt this complaint? What shall we do to be more obedient for the future? Truly, I know no better method than to take a fresh, believing view of a crucified Saviour, and keep our eyes fixed upon him. This the apostle represents as a strong and forcible motive. Let us then approach this ordinance, and see Jesus evidently set forth, crucified before our eyes, among us, and for us. Come, O my soul, and behold this great sight. Let these elements help thy weak conceptions, and fix thy wavering faith. By this sight may a more affecting sense of the love of Christ be impressed upon my heart, as it will promote a deep and habitual conviction of my strong obligation to obedience! And do thou, my God, keep my heart fixed, while this object is before my eyes.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We read in the history of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxi. 1) that when the Israelites had finished the celebration of the passover, "they all went out to the cities of Judah, and threw down all the images, high places, and idolatrous altars, till they had utterly destroyed them all." We may derive a hint of useful instruction from hence. When the religious exercises of a Lord's day, and especially of the Lord's supper, our Christian passover, are finished, we must not think that our work is then ended. No; then the most difficult part begins, which is, to subdue and destroy every thing in our temper and conduct that is offensive to God, to renounce all our idols, and manifest a holy zeal and indignation against sin in ourselves and others. The comforts we have enjoyed at the Lord's table, and the solemn engagements we have renewed, should increase this zeal in our breasts. Let us, with this view, consider that Jesus hath been again set forth crucified among us; not merely to excite some present good affections to him, and give us a transient pleasure; but to be remembered and felt, as a principle and source of obedience, an engagement to demolish every idol and lust in our hearts. It is impossible to describe the folly and madness of those who after such a sight, such a transaction, will not "obey the truth." Look into the world, and see what mens' idols are; what it is that bewitcheth them. It is the love of money or of pleasure. It is following the sinful customs and fashions of a perverse generation. It is neglecting, or coldly performing, daily devotion and the public and private duties of the Lord's day. It is entertaining light thoughts of God, and Christ, and eternal things, or not habitually regarding them. Beware of these fatal enchantments. Look into your hearts and see what hath

bewitched you in former instances, and guard against the folly and deceit for the future. And earnestly pray that you may not enter into any of those temptations. May God give us wisdom to know the truth, hearts to love it, wills steadily to obey it, and then it will be the power of God to our everlasting salvation. Amen.

MEDITATION X.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 20.

And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

A MOST important part of our business at the Lord's table is to renew the exercises of gratitude to God for his various favours bestowed upon us; especially for Christ and the blessings of his gospel; and to express and confirm our resolutions for better obedience. It is very proper on such an occasion to suggest comfort and encouragement to the faithful servants of Christ. And how can it be done better or more effectually than by reminding you of the words which he spoke to his disciples, when he was taking final leave of them, just before he ascended to heaven. "Lo!" saith he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." While every returning season of approaching this holy ordinance brings us nearer to the close of life and our entrance on an eternal state, what can be more comfortable than to think that Christ ever liveth, and will ever be with his church and people? In order to illustrate these words, it may be sufficient to observe that they refer more immediately to the apostles and first disciples, but undoubtedly extend to his faithful ministers and servants in every succeeding age.

They refer more immediately to his apostles, and were designed to animate them and the primitive disciples amidst the difficulties, discouragements, and sufferings to which our Lord had told them they would be exposed. He declares that he would be "with them;" that is, by the tokens of his special presence, and the influences of his Holy Spirit. He would strengthen, assist, and encourage them in the great work to which they were devoted. He would succeed them in preaching his gospel. He would enable them to demolish the false religions by which the world had been for ages corrupted and deluded; and to establish that true, pure, and holy religion which he introduced; and to promote knowledge, piety, and happiness through the earth. It may also intimate that he would carry them with honour and comfort through all their trials and

sufferings, and enable them to be faithful unto death. He promises to be with them "always;" "all the days," as the original is; i. e. every day and in every circumstance, so that they should never be left alone, but have the Spirit and presence of Jesus, their divine Master, continually with them. And he promises to be with them "even unto the end of the world." Undoubtedly this promise must give high delight to the disciples, and be a noble, powerful, constant incentive to them to be faithful to their trust, active in their labours, and patient under their sufferings, even unto death. Well might the evangelist put his joyful "Amen" to such a declaration, and accept so gracious and extensive a promise with all faith, fervent gratitude, and cheerful expectation.

But doth this promise extend to the apostles alone? No, undoubtedly; the same disposition which led our blessed Lord to be tender of them, and consult their safety and comfort, leads him to a gracious care of his people in all ages. And the expression, "always, even unto the end of the world," plainly shows that the promise extends to us; and that our indulgent Master, in using these phrases, intended that we should understand it so, and take the comfort of such a declaration. Christ will be with his faithful ministers in every age. And though one and another of them die (for the prophets do not live for ever), yet he raiseth up a succession; furnisheth them with all their gifts and graces, and maketh their labours prosperous. It is a great consolation to serious Christians, while some ministers are decreasing, to see others increasing. Thus Christ showeth his tender, faithful regard to the interest of his church. He will in every age support his own cause, repair the wastes of time and death, raise up a seed to serve him, make his religion triumphant over all opposition, and lasting as the world itself. In this view it is very comfortable to see young souls joining themselves to the Lord, filling up their fathers' places, and likely to support religion, and transmit it honourably to the next generation. Well might such an declaration be ushered in with a note of admiration; "Lo! I am with you." Behold it. Attend to it with wonder and joy. Assure yourselves of its truth, and venture your souls—your all upon it. Let us, with the evangelist, put our hearty Amen to it: expressing our earnest desire that it may be so. So be it, blessed Lord. Be always with thy church. Be always with us, and we need no more to make us a flourishing, holy, and happy society. Let us set our Amen to it, as expressing our firm expectation that it shall be so. They are the words of him who is faithful and true, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Amen, Lord, if thou be with us we will decline no labours, we will refuse no sufferings. We will not fear death itself. We will not unreasonably and immoderately regret the death of our dearest, most valuable, and

useful friends. Thou wilt be with succeeding ministers and Christians when we are gathered to our fathers. Oh, delightful view and hope! Be thou, O my soul, ever with him, and exert thyself to the utmost in the service of thy most gracious and ever-present Lord. His church will be supported, whoever or whatever riseth up against it. He will be with me through life and death. He will be with all his faithful servants to the end of the world; till all his schemes relating to this earth are accomplished. He will come again to receive them to complete felicity. I trust that I shall "be with him where he is, to behold his glory, yea, be ever with the Lord." To support my faith in these great promises and blessings, and the expectation of his second coming, this ordinance was appointed. In it I see the evidences and tokens of his constant presence with his church, and his everlasting love to it. And may he now, by the communications of his Spirit to my heart, evidently show me that he is present with me of a truth, and remember that word to all his servants, upon which he hath caused us to hope.

AFTER PARTAKING.

A minister of eminent learning and sanctity* used to say, "If it were the will of God he should choose that his taper should be blown out in the sanctuary; and he could especially be glad to die at the table of the Lord." And indeed where is it more desirable to meet death, than at that ordinance, when we have been commemorating that love, to which we owe our hopes of eternal life, and giving up ourselves afresh to the Lord who bought us? But this must be as God pleaseth. What we have been doing will, I hope, promote our preparation for death, and reconcile our thoughts to it. Before another opportunity of this nature returns, we may be in eternity. Let us be so careful to improve this, that we may be ready for that day, which will call us from all mortal enjoyments and all religious services here, to the more immediate presence of our Lord. Let us encourage ourselves with the thought, that he will be with our fellow-Christians, whom we leave behind; with our successors; our children, and children's children, and with our ministers, even to the end of the world. While they are again and again sitting down at his table, we shall be sat down with him in his heavenly kingdom, at a nobler entertainment, in a holier and happier society; and nothing will ever interrupt our consolation and joy. Let it be our daily care that while we live we may live to the Lord; and when we die, we may die to the Lord; that whether we live or die we may be the Lord's; and then it is hardly worth a single thought, when and where and how we die.

* Mr. Nathaniel Taylor.

MEDITATION XI.

Psalm cvii. 8.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

The goodness of the Lord is the most delightful subject that we can contemplate; it is likewise the most copious and edifying one. It tunes the harps and voices of the blessed inhabitants of heaven; and no topic can be more proper and suitable for our meditation at the Lord's supper. I hope we have been already reflecting upon it, in our preparation for this service; and if our hearts have been warmed by the contemplation of it, we shall join in the most fervent wishes, that God, who is good to all, may have praise and honour from all; and that every child of man, capable of observing and considering his wonderful works, may give him the glory due to his name. We shall, with earnest desire, adopt the language of the psalmist in the words now before us. These intimate to us, that men have great reason to praise God; that they are very deficient and negligent in praising him; that this neglect is very deplorable; every good man will lament it, and wish that a grateful, devout spirit universally prevailed.

I. *That men have reason to praise God is most evident;* for the earth is full of his goodness, and he hath made his wonderful works most apparent to the children of men. His general goodness, the displays of it to mankind according to their respective circumstances, and especially the peculiar appearances of Providence in their favour, render a tribute of praise from them his due, and lay them under the strongest obligations to adore and love their benefactor. But those are under the greatest, most distinguishing and endearing obligations to do this, whom he hath favoured with the everlasting gospel, called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus; especially those who have been taught to receive, comply with, love, obey, and confide in this gracious dispensation of divine goodness, this wonderful work of wisdom and mercy.

II. *But that men are very deficient in this duty is equally evident.*

We see multitudes who are daily insulting and provoking their benefactor; and even some, who are under the greatest personal obligations to him. The conduct of others, who are not quite so base and impious, shows that their expressions of thankfulness are only the language of their lips, and that their souls are

unaffected with the divine bounties. They want love to God, their benefactor, and hearts to praise him; "the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways, they have not glorified." In how few Christian families is the voice of thanksgiving to be heard! Yea, how languid are the praises of his servants, even the best and devoutest of his servants.

III. *Now this neglect and coldness is very deplorable.*

Every good man will lament it, and wish and pray that God's rational creatures were more devout and grateful. He will do this, because he loves him and love them. He knows that praise is highly becoming dependent creatures daily and hourly obliged to their benefactor, in whom they live and move and exist. He knows that they who are ungrateful are, in effect, worse than the brutes, who, according to their capacities, express some signs of gratitude to their owners and masters who feed them. He knows that they who continue ungrateful will at length be deprived of all their mercies, and be punished with everlasting destruction; and that their punishment will be peculiarly dreadful, who are ungrateful to God for his unspeakable gift, and all the inestimable blessings of the glorious gospel. Therefore he wishes and prays that men may be more sensible of the divine goodness, and more thankful for it. He will exhort and encourage them to praise God, and say, "Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." He will pray that those who are now worshipping idols may be brought to serve the living God; and that he from whom they have all good may have all praise. Every true Christian will wish and pray, that all his fellow-Christians may have a deeper and more abiding sense of their obligations to the best of beings. Yea, it will be his fervent prayer, that from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord's name may be great; that his praises may be celebrated in the most devout and grateful strains, and shown forth in the lives of all who profess to know and worship him.

I hope, my brethren, that these are our pious and benevolent dispositions; and as far as they prevail in our hearts, they will be pleasing to God, and increase our own gratitude. That gratitude let us express with peculiar attention and pleasure at this ordinance. Here we see more of the goodness and the wonderful works of the Lord, than in any other place and circumstance. Yes (will the Christian say) my heart is in some measure impressed, oh that it were thoroughly warmed, with the suitable and delightful subject. I see an almighty, holy, and justly offended being reconciling a sinful world to himself by Christ. Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other, and appear in most beautiful harmony. I see, indeed, the evil of sin displayed in all its deformity and

malignity. But that display is designed to humble me for it, and keep me from it; and to show my need of Jesus as a Saviour. And thus it is an appointment resulting from and displaying great goodness. I see Jesus, whose name and nature is wonderful, becoming a sacrifice for sinful men; and pardon, peace, assistance, and eternal life procured for me by his blood. Come then, my soul, and view and reflect on the wonderful works of the Lord to the sinful, helpless children of men. No ordinance is so well adapted to fill my heart with thankfulness. I have found it, in former instances, exciting and cherishing the most grateful affection to my indulgent and merciful Father. Here are not only one or two instances of divine goodness, but a multitude of them. Here is a constellation of mercies, shining fo th with the greatest brightness, and reflecting a lustre upon each other. Here are the most valuable favours ever communicated to mortals; and all centring in this, to make them holy, peacefully, and eternally happy. I cannot conceive any circumstance of life, in which thankfulness and joy are more proper and becoming. No transaction seems better adapted to keep alive the sacred fire of divine love in my heart, and so to render all the services and acts of religion pleasant and delightful to me. Come then, O my soul! and, whatever others do, with all thy powers, "praise the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men;" and do it the more fervently, because they neglect it, or coldly perform it.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When David had been expressing the many dangers through which he had passed, and the goodness of God in his deliverance out of them, and the bountiful manner in which he had dealt with him, he saith, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits unto me?" (Ps. cxvi. 12.) This is a question which we should often put to our own souls, as in the presence of God; especially when we have been joining in this ordinance, where we commemorate his wonderful goodness and works, and the exceeding riches of his grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. But we ought to be very particular in our inquiries of this kind. "What acts of obedience are required and expected from me? What services can I perform for my bountiful Father? How can I serve my Christian brethren, to whom his goodness also extends; who are the objects of his approbation and delight? How can I promote his interest and glory in the world, to whose care and mercy I am infinitely obliged?" Let us thus frequently consider what we can do for him; carefully watch and cheerfully embrace every opportunity of testifying the grateful sense we have of our obligations to him, and manifesting how much we are devoted to his service and glory. He hath shown us in his word, by his precepts and the example of his saints, especially

the example of our Lord and master, what he expecteth and requireth from us, and with what sacrifices and services he will be well pleased. Having yielded ourselves up afresh unto the Lord, let our whole lives be employed for him. Every action, word, and thought should be, as far as possible, an act of gratitude, and an acceptable sacrifice to him. Having sung his praises, let us be careful never to forget his wonderful works; but resolve, in divine strength, that we will serve him without slavish fear, yea with fervent love, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives. Thus shall we at length join with all the saved of the Lord, in everlasting praises to him for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men.

MEDITATION XII.

Jeremiah iii. 19.

But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me.

I congratulate you, my brethren, that we are again permitted to partake of the Lord's supper, and to appear as children at our Father's table. I hope we approach it with filial dispositions; that we are sensible of the great honour which God hath conferred upon us in permitting us to draw near to him; that we delight in every returning opportunity of acknowledging our obligations and renewing our vows. I hope we come with a cheerful expectation that we shall find it good for us thus to draw near to God; that we shall receive our Father's blessing, and feel the influence of the Spirit of adoption, strengthening and comforting us, and being an earnest of eternal glory. That I may assist your meditations, and excite suitable affections in your hearts, let me recommend to you those elegant, instructive, and comfortable words which are now before us. They probably refer to the restoration of the ten tribes in the latter day, their being united to their Jewish brethren, and all united to the Christian church under the great Shepherd of souls. And we may observe in them two things which well deserve our attention; the purpose which God formed in their favour, and the wise, gracious, and honourable method by which it should be effected. Let us consider,

I. *The purpose which God formed in their favour.*

And that was, to put those who had revolted from him "among his children, and give them a pleasant land." This

naturally represents the circumstances of all mankind, and God's merciful purpose with regard to those to whom the gospel cometh. They have all revolted and backslidden from him, their owner and their Lord. They, like Israel, have "walked after the imagination of their evil hearts." In consequence of this, they have deserved to be for ever rejected and cast off. But God hath compassion on them, and is not willing that any should perish. He hath therefore sent his Son to redeem them; and the language of his gospel is, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you. For I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." His purpose is to bring them to a sense of their duty to him, as their father, and to qualify them for a place in his family. He intends that, being set among his children, they may be instructed by his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit; defended by his powerful grace, and have all their spiritual wants supplied out of his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. But his purpose extended further, to "give them a pleasant land, a goodly heritage;" even the land of Canaan, which the hosts of heathen nations then possessed, but to which the Israelites were to be restored. This land is often represented as a type and figure of heaven, which infinitely better deserves the name of "a pleasant land, a goodly heritage." For it is the more immediate residence of the blessed God, and of his friends and favourites, where "there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore." For this heritage men were originally intended, and when by sin they had forfeited their title to it, God purposed, by the dispensation of the gospel, to restore them to the expectation, and fit them for the possession of it. This was the purpose which God purposed in himself, that sinful men should be made his children, and enjoy the better country, that is, a heavenly one. Let us now observe,

II. *The wise, gracious, and honourable method by which this purpose was to be effected.*

The words, "How shall I do this?" suppose a kind of difficulty in the way. They do not signify, How shall I persuade myself to do it? But, how shall I secure my honour in doing it? How shall it be done, consistent with my justice and holiness, and my regard to the authority and glory of my government? This strongly intimates that men are unworthy of so great a favour; that they have done nothing to deserve it, and have no reason to expect it. It intimates likewise the difficulty of contriving a method by which this end may be answered, and the perfections of God so displayed, as to prevent his grace from being perverted and abused. Now, God himself hath found out a solution of this difficulty, which all the wisdom and sagacity of men and angels could never have discovered. And that is,

appointing his Son to die as a sacrifice for sin, that he might appear "just, while he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus;" and also by producing a filial temper in the souls of his backslidden creatures. To this the passage we are considering plainly refers, for it is added, "And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." That is, in order to be an object of my favour and an heir of this inheritance, thou shalt return to me and behave as an affectionate, dutiful child. This is a very just and instructive view of religion. It is calling God "Father," which includes a grateful sense of his bounty and love, a cheerful obedience to all his commands, and an humble submission to all his appointments. It must be observed further, that the words intimate that divine grace should be exerted to produce and maintain this temper in the soul. God undertakes that such should be their disposition and conduct. This is largely explained in the New Testament, where we are so often informed that God giveth his Spirit to remove the alienation of the human heart from himself; to incline and teach men to pray, and to live suitably to their prayers; and to encourage their expectation of his paternal favour and everlasting mercy.

And now, my brethren, let us enter into these instructive and delightful thoughts, and gratefully adore our heavenly Father, that he hath formed such a merciful design, and carries it on by such steps as at once display his holiness and goodness, and qualify rational creatures for endless happiness. What, O my soul, can be more kind and gracious than the purpose to make rebels friends, yea children? Is not the method taken to promote and strengthen a filial temper in them, as happy for them as it is honourable to God? I would daily reflect upon these privileges and hopes; I would never forget that they are enjoyed by means of what Jesus hath done and suffered, and that they are communicated by him. Let me never forget the apostle's words, that we are "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," and are made "accepted in the beloved." It is the Spirit of God's Son which is sent into my heart, as a Spirit of adoption. And how can I express my gratitude, hope, and joy in more proper and sublime language than the apostles have taught me? "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!" With such devout and grateful sentiments I would partake of this ordinance. Here I am set among God's children. I here taste that my Father is gracious. I have here the strongest assurance of his paternal care and love, and a confirmation of my hopes of enjoying the pleasant land, the goodly heritage, which he hath prepared for his children. May his Spirit now

witness with mine, that I am indeed a child of God, and be to me an earnest of the purchased possession !"

AFTER PARTAKING.

This ordinance can never answer its end, and be improved in a proper manner, unless we remember and seriously consider, that while it is a display of divine love, a commemoration of the seal of the covenant of grace, and an assurance of the most glorious privileges and blessings, it is also an obligation to abound in every filial and every Christian grace. Let us carefully attend to our duty as described in the words which we have been considering. "How shall I set thee among the children ? saith the Lord." The answer is, "Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." It is therefore to be our constant care, that we never turn away from God ; that our hearts are not estranged from his fear and love by any temptations, allurements, or enemies ; and that our whole lives be devoted to his service, and diligently employed in it. God speaketh peace and happiness to all his children, "but let them not turn again to folly." This would be vile ingratitude, abominable treachery, and the most daring, inexcusable rebellion. The greatness of our privileges and hopes will aggravate our disobedience to our Father's will. Let this be remembered for our caution. At the same time let us remember, for our encouragement, that God engageth that we shall not turn away from him. That is, he will afford us sufficient grace, so that if we exert our best endeavours, carefully wait upon God, and use the appointed means, we shall be faithful and persevere. This is his covenant, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" and if we be followers of him as his children ; if we cherish and improve in this filial temper, we shall enjoy the pleasant land, the goodly heritage above. And though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet this we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him, seeing him as he is." With such an expectation let us always remember the apostle's direction, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

MEDITATION XIII.

Matthew i. 21.

And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.

It hath been thought proper and important in all ages to record the names and keep up the remembrance of those who have been the deliverers of a nation from tyranny and slavery, or have been, by other methods, great and extensive benefactors to mankind. Every generous mind, especially those who are immediately benefited by them, will be ready to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of such worthy and useful men. And shall not the name of Jesus, my brethren, be ever dear and precious to us; ever fresh in our memory, ever delightful to our ears, ever welcome to our hearts? No one ever did, or could do, such great and extensive service to mankind as he hath done. Other benefactors and saviours soon died, and their services ceased; though the good effects of what they had done might continue through many years and ages. But Jesus, though he hath long since left the world and gone to the Father, still continues to serve us. He hath freed us from a state of ignorance and darkness; and if we are indeed his people, from sin and hell; yea he will deliver us from the power of the grave, and raise us to immortal life and glory. He is still by his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit, carrying on the work of salvation in us, and training us up for the perfection of it in a future state. How careful should we be to keep up the memory of his doctrine, his obedience, his sufferings and saving benefits! With what gratitude should we commemorate his name and his love at this ordinance, which was appointed for that purpose! What more glorious and excellent could be said of him than this, that "he shall save his people from their sins?" What more honourable to him? What more comfortable to us? "He shall save them," saith the angelic messenger. He shall not only attempt it; even the attempt would have been kind; but he shall actually do it. It is intimated in this declaration, that he shall have a people to save; some, yea many, even thousands and millions, who shall embrace his doctrine, obey his commands, and trust his saving power. His labours of love and his sufferings shall not be vain. So it was foretold by Isaiah, "He shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." He shall give eternal life to all that the Father hath given him. Again, he shall save, completely save, all who are his people; all who sincerely believe and trust in him and obey him. He hath saved many of them already. Multitudes in every period of the Christian church have been delivered from sin and hell, and conducted

to glory by him, and are now the monuments of his saving power and grace. Many that we knew, esteemed, and loved; yea many, who have often partaken with us of these memorials of his death, are now with him, enjoying his blissful presence, and adoring his sacred name. He is still carrying on his saving design. We see some effects of it in many souls around us; the work of religion, beginning, proceeding, and greatly advanced in our fellow-Christians. I hope that we feel his saving grace in our own souls; that we find the habits of sin weakened, its power gradually declining, and the habits of piety, holiness, and love, confirmed and strengthened. He will save thousands who are yet unborn, and to the remotest ages have "a seed to serve him, who shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." Finally, if we continue faithful to him he will complete our salvation. For as the apostle teacheth us to argue, "If when enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." What can hinder the complete salvation of his faithful people? Is he not Jesus, a divine Saviour, Immanuel, God with us? So united to the supreme God and Father of all, that the perfections of the most High are in effect his, to be employed for their salvation? Can Satan, can the world, can life or death, or things present or to come, destroy any one of those whom Jesus will save? He hath hitherto been "mighty to save," "able to save to the uttermost;" and no soul ever was destroyed, that was one of his people. And hath he lost his power? Are his grace and faithfulness lessened? It is impossible. With what gratitude and joy doth it become us to celebrate his love, and welcome him with our most cheerful hosannas, who comes on so kind a design to save his people from their sins? Some illustrious princes and warriors have been called "saviours" on account of the liberty and happiness which they procured for those in whose cause they were employed; and their names are honourably recorded in history, and still venerable. And shall we not glory in the name of Jesus and the salvation he hath effected? If it is begun in our own souls, and we are experiencing its gradual advances, we shall say with the warmest gratitude, "Hosanna! blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; even he who is meek and having salvation!" Nor would I willingly say any thing to damp your devout pleasure on this occasion, did not the experience of my own heart give me too much ground to suspect that you also have cause for humiliation before God. Alas! I have too much reason to blush and mourn before the Lord, that I have not attained greater degrees of salvation from sin, when nothing hath been wanting on the part of Jesus to produce them. I have heard and read much of him. I have long had some acquaintance with him and his gospel of salvation. He hath been evidently and often set forth in this ordinance, crucified before

my eyes. Why then am I so much in love with sin? Why are there so many sad and painful remainders of it in my heart? Why have I so little activity and zeal in his service? Why so little care to prepare my heart for religious ordinances, especially this? Why am I so cold and formal in my supplications and thanksgivings? Why am I so fond of earth and creatures, and so averse, at least feel so much reluctance, to think of heaven and die to go to Jesus, which I cannot but acknowledge to be far, yea, infinitely better? Whose heart doth not feel sentiments, and in effect utter complaints, like these? Such thoughts and reflections are very proper at this ordinance; for he who thus "humbleth himself shall be exalted." He shall receive more grace from Christ, to strengthen him against remaining imperfections and temptations, and to establish his heart in the service of his divine master. While we are thus humbled for sin, let us think of Jesus "the Saviour." Let us thankfully partake of these memorials of his death: that the work of salvation may be carried on in us, and we may be more than conquerors over every corruption and temptation, through him that hath loved us.

AFTER PARTAKING.

It is a most important, amiable, and instructive view, which the apostle giveth us of the gospel, when he calls it, "a doctrine according to godliness" (1 Tim. vi. 3). The grand design of it is to save us from sin, and engage us to live godly in Jesus Christ. It should be our care to behave as those who reverence and love the name of Jesus, and think it our honour and a reason for great thankfulness, that we are his disciples. He died to redeem us from all iniquity. Let us abstain and fly from it with the greatest resolution. Let us act as God's redeemed servants, and "glorify him in our bodies and spirits which are his." In order to this, we should go forth to our Christian warfare in the strength of Jesus, and in his name lift up our banners against every spiritual enemy. This sacred name should be mentioned and pleaded in all our addresses to the throne of grace. The recollection of the methods by which Jesus saves us; even, by his doctrine, his death and intercession, ought to keep us habitually humble, watchful, and faithful. Let us sincerely wish well to, and daily pray for, the success of his saving design; that he would "add to his church such as shall be saved." And let us labour to save the souls committed to our care, and all others to whom our influence can extend. Thus we, in our humble sphere, should be workers together with him. Think frequently and seriously of the heavenly world, and those thousands of thousands who have been redeemed and saved by Jesus, whose hearts are filled with his love, and who celebrate his praises. The hope of being united to the grand company of the saved of the Lord, should

excite us to the greatest diligence to grow more perfect in every good work. And it should comfort and encourage us under the unavoidable imperfections of the present state. May we at length join all the redeemed, in ascribing salvation, and glory, and blessing and praise to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen.

MEDITATION XIV.

Isaiah xl. 31.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint.

It is the privilege of Christians to have the hope of glory set before them. It is the privilege of sincere and steady Christians to feel the good effects of this hope in supporting and animating their hearts amidst bodily infirmities, and the other afflictions of the present state. Nothing is better adapted to establish the vigour of the soul, and increase and strengthen the hope of glory, than a diligent care to wait upon God, in the use of all those means which he hath appointed. With this view, I hope and believe, you are approaching to this ordinance. And to assist your reflections, and encourage your expectation of divine assistance through a mediator, let me recommend to you that comfortable promise, which God by the prophet Isaiah giveth in the words before us. In meditating upon it, it will be natural to consider, the duty recommended; the encouragement given; and then suggest the reasons we have to depend upon it.

I. *The duty here recommended is waiting upon the Lord.*

This expression may include many acts of the mind; but the connexion of the words shows that here it principally refers to prayer. The prophet had said, that God "giveth power to the faint, and increaseth the strength of the weak;" that the youths, however vigorous and active, if they trust to their native strength, and forget their dependence upon God, shall not only "faint and be weary," but "utterly fall." Yet he adds, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Waiting on the Lord then implies a sense of our own weakness and our need of divine help. It also implies a persuasion of the power and goodness of God; his readiness to stretch out his almighty hand to help us amidst the difficulties, infirmities, and temptations to which we are exposed. It implies that divine help is to be sought by prayer; that we daily wait upon God with our fervent requests for his guidance

and defence. And if we hope for his interposition, we are to be diligent in the use of those means which he hath appointed, and to which he hath promised his blessing. We are to exert our most resolute endeavours to support and help ourselves. And it may intimate that we are patiently to persevere in the way of duty, even though he should not immediately appear for our assistance and defence. Let us also attend to

II. *The encouragement given, or the promise annexed to thus waiting on the Lord.*

Such devout, humble souls shall "renew their strength." They shall grow more steady and established in religion. They shall find a supply of divine help proportioned to their trials. As their work and their difficulty is renewed, so shall the vigour of their souls be renewed; and as their day is, their strength shall be. How far this strength shall operate, and what noble effects it shall produce, may be seen by the following words; "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Eagles are remarkable for mounting upwards; building their nests on high places, and moving with a swift, strong, steady flight. Thus the devout servants of God shall move onward in their Christian course; mount towards the heavenly state without being unduly influenced by the enjoyments and temptations of this world. They shall surmount all the opposition and difficulties which they meet with; "they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." They shall proceed steadily in a course of obedience without fainting and tiring. They shall cheerfully and constantly press on towards the glorious prize, notwithstanding the burdens and temptations of the flesh, and the many other difficulties which they have to contend with. Thus it is promised, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands," a pure disposition of soul, and a heart elevated above sensual enjoyment, "shall grow stronger and stronger." But (it may be asked) can we depend upon such an encouragement as this? We daily feel that we need it. May we be assured that this will be our own case? I answer, undoubtedly; for,

III. *Waiting upon God hath in itself a natural tendency to establish and strengthen the soul.*

It promoteth that humility which is our greatest security, and restrains that pride which goeth before a fall. It will also lead us to exert our best endeavours, and put forth all our own strength; as we would not be chargeable with the guilt of affronting God, by asking his help without them. The nature of the blessed God strengthens this encouragement. Therefore the prophet had suggested to Israel this thought, that "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth,

fainteth not neither is weary." His power is vast and unbounded, and nothing is too hard for him. His understanding is infinite, there is no searching it. Therefore he can never be puzzled with any difficulties, but must know how, in every possible case, to deliver the godly out of their temptations. "To the faint, and them that have no strength" of their own, he "giveth power," how low soever they may be brought, even to the very brink of despair. Consider also his promises and his covenant; promises many, exceedingly great and precious, and all designed to give us strong consolation. His covenant is ordered in all things and sure. He hath given us his dear Son, and with him all things. Inexhaustible treasures of grace and strength are lodged in his hands, out of whose fulness we may receive every needful supply. He hath appointed this ordinance to direct our thoughts to the seal of that covenant. It is a solemn attestation of the grace of the gospel, and all its blessings on God's part. On ours, it expresseth our desire of his help, and our devotedness to his service. Let our souls, therefore, "wait upon the Lord, and in his word let us hope." And doth not your own experience, Christians, confirm this reasoning? Yes, will you say, blessed be God it doth. I have often found my strength renewed, and have acted most vigorously in his service, when I have most sincerely, and fervently, and humbly waited upon him. I have often been in circumstances in which I have been ready to conclude, that I should be quite sunk and overborne by temptations and afflictions, or that I should lose the possession of my own soul, because I lost some valuable earthly comforts. But God hath wonderfully supported me. He hath been better to me than my fears, and I have seen reason to adopt the apostle's language, "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I have been most sensible of my own weakness, most diffident of myself, and most confident in God, I have experienced much inward vigour, and been carried through difficulties seemingly insurmountable. I have his faithful promise, that this shall still and always be the case. I would therefore encourage myself in the Lord my God. I would come to this ordinance with a firm faith in his promises, ratified and sealed with the blood of Christ. And as the best preparation for it, I would now go boldly to the throne of grace, in the name of a faithful, compassionate high-priest, that I may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

AFTER PARTAKING.

"Wait on the Lord," saith the psalmist, "be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm xxvii. 14). This we have been doing with peculiar solemnity. But it is to be the business of every day. No exhortation can be more important. No one would have a

greater influence to strengthen the divine life in our souls if it were duly practised. Let me urge you to live near to God in the exercises of lively faith, and humble fervent devotion. And while you are so doing, strive to keep up your courage. Let not your hearts sink under the difficulties and burdens of life. For "in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength;" and he is as ready as he is able, to make all grace abound to you. Let me urge this duty upon the young, who have lately given themselves unto the Lord, and are setting out in religion. Remember what the prophet saith, "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." Those that are confident in themselves, who trust to the strength of their own endeavours, and the firmness of their own resolutions, will faint and fall. But the soul which maintains an humble sense of its dependence upon God, and continued need of his assistance, and fervently implores it; the soul which is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus will not faint. Or, if he should sometimes be weary, he shall not "utterly fall." Let me urge this duty upon the aged and infirm. Providence, by secluding you in a great measure from the business and amusements of the world, calleth you to be more frequent in the exercises of devotion, to serious, habitual ejaculations, and to keep God and heaven more diligently in your eye. Let me exhort you to continue in prayer, and abound therein with thanksgiving. All other Christian graces are nourished by devotion. The practice of every other virtue is supported and made easy and agreeable by it. It is the best refuge of human frailty. It is the greatest support of heavenly perfection. Wonder not, therefore, if I imitate the psalmist, and again and again say, "Wait on the Lord." "Be anxious about nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God; and his peace, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen.

MEDITATION XV.

Hebrews ix. 15.

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament (or covenant), that by the means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

It is proper sometimes to remind Christians, that the leading design of their assembling at the Lord's supper, is to commemorate the death of Christ, to recollect and impress upon their minds the ends for which he submitted to it, and to cherish

those dispositions which are suited to the obligations they are under to him. The view which the apostle gives us of the design of Christ's sufferings in this passage is very instructive and comfortable, and therefore proper to be the subject of our meditation. He had been stating the difference between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of beasts under the Mosaic law, and showing how much more excellent the former was than the latter. He then proceeds, in the words now before us and in the following verses, to compare the old and the new covenant. And here we may observe the view given us of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the ends of his death.

I. *Let us attend to the view here given us of Christ.*

He is "the mediator of the new testament" or covenant. Under the former covenant, which is here compared with the Christian covenant, Moses was the mediator, interposing between God and Israel; who were parties in the covenant, when the law was given at mount Sinai. The apostle tells the Galatians that it "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. iii. 9.) The new covenant is better than the former, as it was established upon better promises. It was more properly than the former, a covenant of grace, and was transacted through a greater and more excellent mediator, even Christ. He is called in this epistle, "the surety of the better covenant." Now both these titles intimate to us that he hath not only interposed to make peace and establish a friendship between God and man, but undertaken and engaged that the agreement or stipulations on both parts shall be fulfilled. He hath displayed the holiness and faithfulness of God. All the promises of the covenant are "yea and amen," faithful and sure in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God. The Father's appointing him to be Mediator and accepting his sacrifice, of which he gave sufficient proof by raising him from the dead, are convincing evidences of the mercy of God and his faithfulness to his engagements. Christ is also the mediator on our part; as he is the head of the church, acts in the name of his people, supplies them with all necessary assistance, and will bestow eternal life upon all who comply with the terms of the covenant. Thus is Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

II. *Let us now take a brief view of the ends of his death.*

And they were, to obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life for mankind; two of the greatest blessings which they needed as guilty, immortal creatures. He died "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under," or against, "the first covenant;" to deliver men from the guilt of their former transgressions, and that sentence of condemnation which lay against them in consequence of these. The apostle plainly intimates that their

transgressions could not be redeemed; that is, the pardon of them purchased and obtained by the former covenant, or any of its rites or sacrifices. These were never intended to expiate offences to such a degree as to deliver the sinner from the final judgment of God in another world. In this respect "the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin." It only "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh." It made peace for the offender with the government under which he then was; that is, the extraordinary government of Jehovah as king of Israel. It furnisheth him with a pardon, which might be pleaded against any prosecution that might be commenced against him in their courts of justice, or against any exclusion from the privileges of the temple. This you will endeavour to keep in mind, as a thought which throws great light upon the Mosaic dispensation. It also confirms the apostle's reasoning concerning the superior excellency of the sacrifice of Christ; since that tended to purify the conscience, and saves all who are penitent from the sentence of God, as the moral governor of the world, even from everlasting condemnation. Thus Christ is said to die "to take away our sins," to "bring us to God," and to "deliver us from the wrath to come." The other end of Christ's death was to obtain eternal life for mankind; "that all who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." The first covenant, that at mount Sinai, had no direct reference to this; only to an inheritance in the land of Canaan and to other temporal blessings, which were proposed as the reward of obedience. But the great promise and motive of the gospel is eternal life; "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in the heavens." This is insured to all sincere believers by the death of Christ. That great event confirmed the covenant in which it is promised. His resurrection from the dead shows the efficacy of that atonement by which it was purchased, and secures the resurrection of all his faithful followers to eternal life. For these important ends Jesus Christ died. And how can our thoughts be more suitably employed at this solemnity, than in serious and devout meditation on the death of Christ, considered in this light?

Be thankful, O my soul (should each of us say), for such a Redeemer, such deliverance, such promises, and such hopes. Rejoice in him, to whom thou owest thy prospects of pardon, peace, and salvation. There was a time, indeed, when these appeared to thee no such considerable and valuable blessings. When I was immersed in worldly cares, minding earthly things; when I was ready to make light of sin, and thought it sufficient to abstain from the grosser acts of iniquity, and keep up some forms of devotion and godliness. But since I have seen what a bitter thing sin is, how glorious and holy the Lord is, and how necessary repentance, conversion, and purity of heart are to my

final acceptance and salvation, I now esteem those blessings of vast and infinite importance. My heart is rising in gratitude to that God and to that Saviour, who have loved me and given me hope through grace. I now venerate and love this ordinance as a memorial of that blood which sealed the covenant of grace; as a solemn token of my accepting the gospel; and of the divine favour and eternal life upon my cordial acceptance of it and obedience to it. I would come to it with a penitent and a grateful heart. I would cherish that holy fear and tenderness of conscience, which the contemplation of Christ's sacrifice is so well adapted to promote. And I desire that those hopes of the eternal inheritance may be strengthened, to which I am begotten by the death and resurrection of my Saviour. I would be particularly careful to consider this hope as a most powerful motive to abstain from sin, from all appearances and occasions of evil, and to be holy in all manner of conversation.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been commemorating the death of Christ, as the seal of that covenant in which pardon and an eternal inheritance are proposed to our acceptance, and confirmed to all that comply with the demands of that covenant. How reasonable and weighty doth that exhortation of the apostle appear at all times, especially after what we have been doing? "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). The end of God's entering into covenant with men, giving them such precious promises, and ratifying them in so solemn and so endearing a manner, is to make us universally pure and holy. It is particularly designed and adapted to excite that high admiration of divine condescension, and that fervent gratitude for the blessings of the gospel, which is a temper at once so honourable and pleasing to him, and the foundation and support of holy obedience. Let us labour to preserve upon our minds worthy thoughts of the gospel scheme; a just sense of its nature and design. Let it be daily considered as "a doctrine according to godliness;" centring in this, to engage us to abstain from the appearance of evil, and perfect holiness and the fear of God. Let it quicken us to press after the highest attainments in religion; animated by that reverence for God, as the supreme Governor, and especially that veneration for his goodness as the Saviour of them that believe, which is so reasonable in itself, and will produce these glorious effects. Let us deeply impress upon our memories and our hearts those words of the apostle, "Every man that hath this hope in him," of being like God and seeing him as he is, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

MEDITATION XVI.

Acts xi. 23.

When Barnabas came to Antioch and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

A violent persecution having dispersed most of the first Christians from Jerusalem, some of them came to Antioch, and preached Christ to the heathen there; and "through the hand," or power "of God, a great number believed and turned to the Lord." The church at Jerusalem, hearing of this, sent Barnabas thither to further this glorious work. And we are here told what he saw; how he was affected with it; and what method he took to support and encourage these good beginnings.

I. *Let us attend to what Barnabas observed.*

"He saw the grace of God;" that is, the effects of his grace or favour granted to the converts. The sacred history informs us, that a great number had believed and turned to the Lord; that is, to Christ, as their Lord and master, with humble faith and submission. They had received and embraced his religion, and changed a vain, carnal, sensual life, for a serious, holy, religious one. Barnabas saw the wonderful and happy effects which the gospel had, not only upon their profession, but their temper and behaviour. And this the historian, with great propriety, ascribes to "the grace" or favour "of God." Observe further,

II. *How he was affected with this sight.*

"He was glad." For (as it follows) "he was a good man." He rejoiced to see the gospel successful in that large, flourishing, but very wicked city. He was glad to see the prejudices of so many removed, and to find them receiving Christ and walking in his ways. Though others had been the instruments of beginning and furthering this divine work, instead of envying them, he, like a good man, rejoiced in their success. And he was delighted to see so great a number added to the church, and to have such an encouraging prospect of the spread of the gospel in that populous place. Once more observe,

III. *What method he took to support and carry on this work.*

"He exhorted them all;" the word signifies both to exhort, and to comfort or encourage. Thus when Barnabas is called "a son of consolation," it is the same word as is used here, though in a different form. He exhorted them "to cleave to the Lord;" steadily to adhere to Christianity; not to forsake their

religious profession and practice on account of any temptations addressed to their hopes or their fears; any allurements or any terrors. He exhorted them not to decline in their zeal or affection; but to improve in their acquaintance with the gospel, in their love and obedience to it; to live a life of dependence upon Christ and devotedness to his service. And he exhorted them to do this, "with purpose of heart;" that is, with a deliberate, firm resolution, founded on serious consideration of the divine authority and the excellency of that religion which they had embraced, and the necessity and advantage of a stedfast adherence to it. He exhorted them to exert the most active, zealous endeavours to oppose every temptation, and to improve every religious opportunity and advantage. The expression may farther import that he encouraged them to do this. He set before them the precious promises and glorious hopes of the gospel, in order to animate them to endure to the end. He assured them of all needful assistance from heaven, and of that crown of glory which should be given to all that were faithful to death.

And now, my brethren, you see how much useful instruction this passage of scripture contains, and how suitable that instruction is to the present service. I may address you as those who have believed the gospel and turned to the Lord. You are ready, I am persuaded, to ascribe this to the grace of God; with great thankfulness to give him the glory, who made serious impressions on your hearts, assisted you to turn from sin and folly to the love and service of the Redeemer; and hath thus far led you on in the way of religion. This good work in your souls is the effect of divine operation, and the evident token of divine favour. Your ministers, like Barnabas, are glad to see the effects of this grace; much more than to see you healthy, prosperous, and comfortable for this world, though in that also they rejoice. To observe your readiness to join yourselves to the Lord, to receive you as members of his church, and meet you at the Lord's table, gives them great joy. And if you have that Christian temper, which we hope and believe you have, you yourselves will be glad to observe the regularity and holiness of your fellow-Christians. But you must allow us, with good Barnabas, still to exhort you "with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord." It is an exhortation which the best of you need. Observe, it is said that Barnabas exhorted them *all*;" as he knew that they were all exposed to many temptations from without and from within. Your temptations also are many; perhaps more dangerous than theirs; as we are more likely to backslide and decline amidst the smiles than the frowns of the world; and to forsake Christ while his churches have rest, than when they are persecuted. Suffer therefore the word of exhortation, and "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart." Enter into serious

consideration of the reasonableness, the wisdom, the comfort, the advantage, of being steadily religious. Be daily strengthening your good purposes and resolutions, by devout meditation, fervent prayer, and renewed self-dedication. Especially do it at this ordinance.

Yes (saith the Christian) glad am I to express and confirm my determination to cleave to the Lord. For I find my heart bent to backslide, and have innumerable temptations to lead me astray from him. I see at this ordinance the divine engagements; the assurances of pardon, assistance, and everlasting happiness to all stedfast Christians. And I would remind myself of, and renew my engagements to act as one of them. I have here many forcible motives to stedfastness set before me. I see the grace of God illustriously displayed in the gift of his Son, and in all the abasement and sufferings to which he submitted for my salvation. I view his obedience unto death, and his love which was stronger than death. I view a representation of that precious blood, which made an atonement for sin; by which I draw near to God, and which opened a way into the holiest. Since God hath appointed his Son to be the captain of our salvation, through whose strength I can do all things, I comfortably argue his readiness to help me in my Christian work and warfare, and cheerfully spring forward to encounter all the difficulties which lie in my way. I can encourage myself with the hope of the assistances of the Holy Spirit, to make me perfect in every good work; since they were obtained for me by a suffering Saviour, and are bestowed by an exalted one. I would draw near to this ordinance with a true heart, with full purpose to cleave to the Lord. And having such a high-priest and mediator, would "come boldly to the throne of grace, that I may obtain mercy" to pardon my past unsteadiness, "and find grace to help in every future time of need."

AFTER PARTAKING.

St. John saith, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." It is the greatest joy of Christian ministers to observe the churches, over which they preside, cleaving to the Lord, and behaving as becometh the gospel. This is what they naturally and reasonably expect from those who have given themselves unto the Lord. Disappoint not, we entreat you, their pleasing expectations from you. Not to cleave to the Lord after what you have so frequently and solemnly promised and vowed in his presence, would deservedly bring upon you just reproach and aggravated guilt. And it will expose you to greater shame and punishment hereafter, than if you had never experienced the grace of God, and never known the way of life. It would bring upon your ministers greater grief of heart, than if you had never made this public profession

of religion and entered into communion with the church. And this thought I am persuaded will have some weight with you. For the sake of God, then, who hath given you this grace; for the sake of Christ, who shed his precious blood for you; for the sake of your ministers, who spend and are spent for your good; for the sake of your own immortal souls, which must be happy or miserable for ever, according as you are or are not stedfast, I once more exhort you, "with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord." And "may the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever." Amen.

MEDITATION XVII.

JOHN XV. 5.

I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

"THEY who are planted in the house of the Lord," saith David, "shall flourish in the courts of our God." He expects fruitfulness in every virtue from his servants, who enjoy the privileges of his house, and he hath made ample provision for promoting it, by the means of grace which he hath instituted. The ordinance of the Lord's supper is one of them; and I hope we come to it with a sincere desire, and a cheerful expectation, to have our fruitfulness increased by serious and devout meditation on the death of Christ. That this end may, by the divine blessing, be answered, let our thoughts be directed to the words now read. In which we may observe, the union between Christ and true Christians; their duty in consequence of this union; the happy effect of practising this duty; and the necessity of the means to the end.

I. *Let us attend to the union between Christ and true Christians.*

It resembles that between the root of a vine and its several branches. This intimates that Christ is the support of the whole church and of every particular believer; that they are all, in the language of the New Testament, implanted and engrafted into him; that is, joined to him by true faith and sincere love; and that they all derive spiritual life and vigour from him. I mention a union to him by true faith and sincere love, because he afterwards distinguisheth between living and dead branches;

between some that abide and are fruitful, and others which are barren and shall be cut off. He plainly intimates that there is a wide difference between those who make a general profession of the gospel, and those who are influenced to such a temper and conduct as it requireth.

II. *Here is the duty of those who are united to Christ;* that is, "to abide in him;" which signifieth both adhering to him and depending upon him.

It signifies adhering to him; maintaining the profession of our faith in him before the world, and by those acts and ordinances, which show our relation to him; continuing "grounded and settled in his religion, and holding fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." It includes likewise a correspondent and consistent behaviour. Thus he adds, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you;" if you remember them, study them, and act agreeably to them; if my instructions, commands, and promises abide in you, and appear to guide and govern and quicken you in your whole conversation. Whatever trials, difficulties, and oppositions you may meet with, you are still to cleave to me, and continue faithful in your obedience to my commands. The expression may likewise signify, depending upon him; regarding him as our root, from whom we derive nourishment or spiritual influence, to make us fruitful; habitually exercising faith in him and love to him. Or (as he expresseth it, v. 9), "continuing in his love;" maintaining affectionate regards to him at all times, as the support of the divine life in the soul, and seeking a supply of spiritual assistance from him.

III. *We have the happy consequence of thus abiding in Christ.* He will abide in us, and we shall bring forth much fruit.

He will abide in us by the Holy Spirit, which he hath given us, and whose gracious assistance he will still afford, as our circumstances may require. By these we shall be enabled to "bring forth" fruit, yea, much fruit; more than any other instructions and dispensations can produce, or than what they who neglect Christ can expect. By communications of life and grace from him, Christians grow, thrive, and increase in every virtue. And this is a great and most valuable blessing. "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth," pruneth, and dresseth "it, that it may bring forth more fruit." His word and ordinances, and the influences of his Spirit attending them, advance the Christian in the divine life. Yea afflictive providences answer the same end. "By these are the iniquities" of God's people "purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away sin." Our Lord here suggests a most important thought; that the best reward God can bestow on his servants for their fruitfulness

in religion, is to make them more fruitful. This contributes greatly to the glory of God, to the honour of their profession, to the good of others, to their present consolation and their eternal advantage. Let us observe once more,

IV. *The necessity of thus abiding in Christ is here asserted.*

"Without me," or (as in the margin) severed or separated from me, "ye can do nothing." Without adhering to me and depending upon me you will be fruitless; as a branch will soon wither and die and become worthless if it be cut off from the root. It is here plainly intimated that we have as constant and necessary a dependence upon the grace and spirit of Christ for the support and vigour of the divine life in us, as the branch hath upon the root for its life and fruitfulness; or as we have upon the common providence of God, for the continuance and support of the natural life. Without this we "can do nothing;" nothing in religion; nothing that will be acceptable to God and contribute to our final happiness. We shall lose all our spiritual attainments and comforts. We shall fall into sin; become the sport of every temptation; and consequently be cut off from Christ as withered branches, which dishonour and injure the tree; and shall like them, be cast into the fire and burnt.

And now, my brethren, these important thoughts should excite us all, whatever our age or standing in the church, and whatever our religious attainments may be, to be desirous of greater fruitfulness and solicitous to attain it.

May not each say, God well knoweth, and thou my soul knowest, that there is much room for improvement; and evident need that frequent admonitions and encouragements to aspire after it be laid before thee! I see and feel my unfruitfulness. I lament it daily before God. I desire to be found in the use of all those means which he hath prescribed for my advancement in religion. I desire to watch against self-confidence, and especially trusting in my own strength. I would endeavour to keep my faith in Christ in lively exercise, and continually to depend upon him. While I have such a Saviour, such a source of vital influence, I would not despair of gaining a victory over prevailing corruptions. When such provision is made for my increasing fruitfulness, I would labour to grow in grace. I know that Christ communicates his influences in and by his ordinances. He hath appointed this, in particular, as a means of deriving nourishment from him. I bless God that I have in any degree experienced the advantage of it already. I hope that I have found my heart quickened, my resolutions confirmed, my devotion made more serious and lively, my obedience more cheerful, my patience more perfect, in consequence of this sacred transaction. While it expresseth to all around me my abiding in Christ by an external profession, may it be attended with a

more stedfast faith in him, and a more ardent love to him! And may he now communicate his spiritual influence to me, that my faith may grow exceedingly, and my love increase more and more in all knowledge and judgment! Thus may I abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus unto the glory and praise of God!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When the Philippians had sent the apostle Paul a generous present during his confinement as a prisoner at Rome, he commends their piety and charity; but he adds (Phil. iv. 17), "Not that I desire a" further "gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." In like manner your ministers, my brethren, do not desire to make a gain of you, or to serve any secular ends by their exhortations and entreaties; but fruit that may abound to your account. It is indeed a great pleasure to them to see you stedfast and advancing in religion. It encourageth them in their work, and makes their labours comparatively easy and pleasant. You cannot confer upon them a greater favour than to be fruitful in holiness. Let me exhort you to labour after it, and diligently to attend the means of religious improvement. Frequently and seriously examine what fruits of righteousness appear in you; what progress you make in religion; what serious regard to God and your own edification there is in your private prayers, and your attendance in public worship and Christian ordinances; what rule you have obtained over your own spirits; what mastery over the sins that most easily beset you; and what care to lead others, especially your families, by your addresses to them and prayers for them, and by your good example, to glorify your Father which is in heaven. Your ministers urge and wish for this, out of concern for the interest of religion, and its support and honour in the next generation: but especially out of a sincere love to your souls. Your own peace, comfort, hope, and happiness, all depend upon your fruitfulness in religion. In proportion to it will be your honour and joy on earth, and your reward in the kingdom of heaven. This therefore we wish, "even your perfection." Thus you will abide in the love of Christ, and be the objects of his everlasting complacency. Thus will the joy of Christ remain in you, and your own joy will be full.

MEDITATION XVIII.

Psalm l. 5.

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

The Lord's supper is so frequently administered in our religious assemblies, and those who attend it are so often reminded of its nature and design, that it is not needful on every occasion of this kind, to enter into a particular account of it. But the best of us often need to be reminded how our thoughts and affections should be engaged and employed, while attending upon it. Some passages of scripture, which do not directly relate to this service, may properly be used and illustrated at the celebration of it. For they may suggest matter for pious meditation and useful instruction. Thus they may subserve the intention of our joining in it, and direct our future conduct. That which is now before us is pertinent to the occasion, as it hints to us the character of God's people, and the command given concerning them; which may naturally be applied to the case of Christians.

I. *Here is the character of good men.* They are "saints," and they have "made a covenant with God by sacrifice."

They are saints. Under this title the Israelites, as the peculiar people of God and his devoted servants, are spoken of in scripture, especially in the blessing of Moses. Thus Christians are called "saints," and we read of "the churches of the saints." This is at once a most honourable and a most instructive title. The word is sometimes used concerning angels as well as men; and signifies holy beings, devoted to the service of God. As applied to men, it signifieth persons who profess relation to God, have been dedicated to him, and are separated from the pollutions of the world. They are consecrated to his service, as a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people. Yet none are truly saints but those who are made really holy, sanctified by the word and Spirit of God, and who employ themselves faithfully in his service. By this expression, "My saints," God claims a property in them, and expresseth his care of them and love to them. Of God's people and saints it is here said, they "have made a covenant with him by sacrifice." The Jewish sacrifices were a covenant transaction between that people and Jehovah their God. They were the signs and seals of their agreement. And indeed almost all the covenants between God and sinful men have been attended with sacrifices, and confirmed by them. God's people under the gospel dispensation have solemnly entered into covenant with him. They

have taken him to be their God, their ruler, and portion; and given up all dependence upon other objects, and all expectation from them, in the great concerns of their souls and religion. They have devoted themselves to him as his covenant people; to be obedient to his laws, zealous for his interest and glory, and submissive to all his directions and disposals. And they may naturally be said to have done this by sacrifice. For in these transactions they have had a devout and believing regard to the death of Christ, as the great sacrifice and propitiation. The gospel is called a new covenant, the covenant of grace, which was ratified and confirmed by the blood or sacrifice of Christ. This ordinance is a commemoration of that sacrifice. Hence the wine is called the new covenant in Christ's blood; and he is said to be constituted shepherd, lord, and head of the church, "by the blood of the everlasting covenant." Christians then may properly be said to join themselves to the Lord, or to make a covenant with him by the sacrifice of his Son. By partaking of this ordinance they engage in covenant transactions with God; put in a humble claim to the many promises which he hath made to his servants, and solemnly bind themselves to the practice of those duties to which their Christian profession obligeth them. Now, it is our business at the Lord's table to remember the covenant which God hath made with us, and the blood of Jesus by which it was confirmed; and to renew our engagements to be the Lord's over the memorials of his death.

II. *Here is the command given concerning God's saints.*

"Gather them together unto me." This is a poetical representation of the people of Israel being summoned to answer to the charge which God had against them, for proving false to his covenant, and trusting to their sacrifices and offerings, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law. But we may naturally apply the words to the circumstances of Christians; and consider them as a command from God to his ministers, to invite his saints to come together. This command they are often addressing and enforcing. And it is painful to God's messengers to observe that they can persuade so few, comparatively, to attend this sacred service, and recollect and renew their covenant engagements by it. It is desirable that many should be gathered together to partake of an ordinance so happily adapted to promote their edification in every Christian grace, and their consolation under the troubles of life. It is desirable that they who have been joined to the church, should not omit any opportunity of renewing their covenant with the Lord. It is desirable, likewise, that those who conscientiously attend this service would seriously consider the nature and

solemnity of their covenant transactions, and in every circumstance and relation act in a beautiful consistency with them. Let this be our care.

Let it be thy care, O my soul! I have the honour and happiness to be gathered with his people; and to have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. This is the main thing; the source of my chief joy. I have also the privilege of having communion with my fellow-Christians in that service. This circumstance makes it peculiarly pleasant; much more so than to eat this bread and drink this wine in private, though in commemoration of Christ, and in the most devout manner I bless God that I am gathered with his saints and united to his church; and that I do not live in the total or general neglect of this sacred institution. I am willing and thankful to be laid under the most solemn engagements to be the Lord's, and often to recollect and renew them. I know that my treacherous heart needs every tie to bind it more closely to God and its duty. I would come, deeply humbled for past violations of my engagements, and with the renewed exercises of repentance and faith. I would take encouragement from the gracious invitations of the gospel, to repeat and confirm those engagements. I would desire to have my heart impressed with the solemn manner in which the covenant was sealed, even by the blood of Jesus; and to remind my soul at once of the bonds and the blessings of it. I would devoutly praise the Lord for the mercies contained in the everlasting covenant, and especially the promise of eternal glory. And I desire and hope to have my faith strengthened, and my comfort promoted by this service. Lord, I come to join myself to thee in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten; with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the great sacrifice, here set forth as crucified before my eyes.

AFTER PARTAKING.

What exhortation can be more suitable, after the transaction in which we have engaged, than that of Moses to Israel (Deut. iv. 23), "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God?" It may justly be feared that those forget it, who never partake of this ordinance: and those also who frequently neglect an attendance upon it. Those do in effect forget it who do not often recollect their solemn engagements at this table, and labour to keep them continually impressed upon their hearts. Those especially forget the covenant of their God who act inconsistently with it; who are not upright, watchful, and stedfast in fulfilling their engagements. Let us take heed unto ourselves, lest any one of these characters should be ours. We have need of this caution, because many seem to forget it. We are liable to forget our engagements, amidst the cares of the world, the temptations of Satan, the enticements of pleasure, and

especially the examples of indolence and neglect which we see around us. Let us remember that God doth not forget it; that he is ever mindful of his covenant, and perfectly knows whether we fulfil ours. He remembers the covenant, to bestow upon us all the blessings comprehended in it, if we are faithful to it; or to execute the curses and threatenings of it, if we are unfaithful and disobedient. Let this then be our assiduous care, that our hearts may be right with him, and that we may be stedfast in his covenant. Consider there is a day coming, when the summons we have been illustrating shall be sent forth and executed by the angels, "Gather my saints together." They shall all be gathered from all places, the most obscure and the most remote; and brought to the presence of their covenant God and Father, who will applaud and reward their fidelity. "I beseech you therefore, brethren" (in the apostle's language) "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him," that you be ever mindful of his covenant, and pay that which you have vowed. Then will you be gathered to all his saints and servants, and be numbered with them in glory everlasting. Amen.

MEDITATION XIX.

1 Kings x. 9.

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

When the queen of Sheba came from the south to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and saw his buildings, provisions, ministers, and servants, she made him a very eloquent speech; and among other things she said, "Blessed be the Lord thy God," &c. She acknowledgeth and praiseth Jehovah, as the author of Solomon's advancement. She observes that it was an evidence of God's special regard to him that he was set on the throne of Israel, God's peculiar people. And she further observes that it was a token of God's great and everlasting love to Israel, that so wise and pious a prince was set over them. With much more justice may these words be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath "set as king, on his holy hill Zion;" and we may say with humble and devout praise, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which delighted in him to make him head and king of the church. Because the Lord loved mankind and was desirous to save them for ever, therefore he made his Son king, to do judgment and justice. Let us see how the words are applicable to Christ, and what reason we have to bless God for so wise and gracious an appointment.

I. *The designation or appointment of Christ to be head and king of the church, was an evident instance of God's delight in him.*

Thus a great honour was conferred upon the Son of God. It is an honour to be any way employed for God. In this view the work of Christian ministers is honourable, and it becomes them to "magnify their office." It is an honour to the angels to be the "ministers of God and do his pleasure." But signal honour was conferred upon Christ, in being invested with so great authority, exalted to so extensive a dominion, and having all things put under his feet. This was an evidence that he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, that God thus exalted him. For nothing but such a disposition can give one rational being a real excellency and superiority above another. A very great trust was reposed in the Son of God; and that shows God's approbation of him and delight in him, no less than recovering God's fallen, sinful creatures to their duty and allegiance, promoting the glory of the great Lord of all, and making so considerable a part of the intelligent creation holy and happy. The Father loveth his Son, and hath given all things into his hands. Again; by this appointment the glory and joy of the Redeemer were advanced. Every soul brought into subjection to him adds to his revenue of praise and honour. He sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied. This was "the joy set before him." What superior honour can God confer on any being, than to render him an instrument of communicating great, extensive, and lasting happiness to many others? This is making such a being, in an eminent degree, like himself. Christ hath a large sphere of service for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. There is joy in heaven whenever it prospers; and whenever the whole redeemed are presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory, it will be to the exceeding joy of Christ himself, and the highest evidence of God's delight in him. Let us further observe,

II. *The appointment of Christ to be king of the church is a remarkable instance of God's love to man.*

Because he loved the world, he made Jesus Christ king, to do justice and judgment. It was an evidence of God's love to men that he appointed prophets and teachers to instruct and reclaim an ignorant, idolatrous, sinful world. But in proportion to the excellency of the persons commissioned to this work, will the divine love and grace be apparent. It is a merciful scheme to rescue the world from ignorance, superstition, and vice, to erect a spiritual kingdom in it, to destroy the works of the devil, and to deliver men from the worst slavery. But to manifest his Son for this purpose was an astonishing instance of mercy. The perfections of his nature, and especially his moral

excellencies, qualify him for this work. His example illustrates and recommends his precepts, and he is able to bestow every blessing which we can want; to deliver us from every thing that would hinder or lessen our happiness, and confer and continue every thing that will promote and secure it.

How pertinent and useful are such reflections as these in this connexion? Did the queen of Sheba bless the God of Israel for appointing Solomon to be king over it? And shall not I ardently praise him for exalting a Son to be a Prince and a Saviour? I would consider from what a slavery he redeems us; from ignorance, error, and a thousand irregular lusts and passions. He redeems us to God, brings us into a state of likeness to him and friendship with him. He hath made effectual provision that we shall not again be enslaved, if we will stand fast in our liberty. I would further consider how wisely and graciously he governs us. His laws are all plain, reasonable, wholesome, excellent; enforced by the most powerful sanctions; and gracious allowances are made for our weakness and imperfection. I would consider also to what a state of glory and happiness he will raise all his faithful subjects. He will bring them to his heavenly courts, fix them beyond the reach of enemies, sorrows, and dangers; in a state of perfect holiness and never-ending joy. How affectionately and gratefully should my soul magnify the Lord for this unspeakable gift!

The design of this ordinance is to bring such truths as these to our remembrance, and keep alive upon our minds a quick sense of our Christian privileges, hopes, and consequent obligations. It tends to cherish and strengthen gratitude for the blessings of the gospel, which is the surest and best source of all holy obedience. Let us draw near and commemorate these blessings. And, oh, may our hearts be filled with thankfulness, while we behold and partake of the memorials of divine love!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When the queen of Sheba had complimented Solomon on his wisdom, prosperity, and the happiness of his servants, and praised God for making him king, she "gave him much gold, spices, and precious stones." This was a token of her high veneration for him, and gratitude for the favours she had received from him. Thus, when we have been commemorating the goodness of God in exalting his Son to be the ruler and Saviour of his people, it becomes us to offer our presents to him. He requireth not, he needeth not, gold, and silver, and precious stones. He requireth that we yield ourselves to him; that we give him our hearts, and testify our allegiance and subjection, not by this service only, but the obedience of our whole lives; that we submit to his government, and study to promote the interests of his kingdom. We have at this ordinance engaged to do so. This

is what we can give, what we ought to give, what alone he will accept. Let us be faithful and obedient to this prince, while we trust in this Saviour; and having again in effect sworn allegiance to him, let us perform it, and keep his righteous judgments.

MEDITATION XX.

Isaiah lvi. 6, 7.

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

These words are capable of suggesting to us some suitable meditations, while attending upon the Lord's supper. They describe the duty of God's people under the Christian dispensation, and the blessings they were to expect from him. For these words, "The sons of the stranger," refer to the gentiles, whom the Jews always considered under the idea of strangers. It is added, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," which is a spiritual and Christian idea; not a house of sacrifice as the Jewish temple properly was. It is also said to be "a house of prayer for all people;" not for the Jews only, but for all the gentiles. These words are quoted by our blessed Lord, as an argument why that court of the temple, which was allotted to the gentiles, should not have been profaned. This famous text then is a clear prophecy of the call of the gentiles into the church of Christ.* Let us attend to this description of of those who are the objects of the divine favour, and entitled to the privileges and blessings of his house.

They "join themselves to the Lord." This supposes a former distance and alienation from him. But that is removed by humble repentance and returning to the Lord, in that method which his word prescribeth. It includes renouncing all their idols, forsaking every sin, every thing contrary to the nature and will of God; a deliberate choice of him as their portion and felicity, and of his people as their friends and associates. The design of their thus joining themselves unto the Lord is "to serve him;" to worship him only, and in sincerity and truth;

* Bp. Hurd's Sermons at Lincoln's Inn, p. 276, &c.

to attend to all the intimations of his will, and to obey all his commands. This is further expressed in the phrase, "to be his servants;" not only to serve him occasionally, or for a while, but perpetually; to adhere to him and his ways from a deep conviction that nothing can be more reasonable, important, and advantageous, than to hear what he saith and to do it. It is added, "And to love the name of the Lord." Their regard to God and their service of him arise from love, from an habitual sense and grateful relish of his goodness. From hence they take delight in his service; they perform it, not from fear and with a servile dread, but from a sincere and strong affection. They "love his name;" that is, they love him, his worship, and his ways, and pursue his work with delight. It is opposed to narrow, selfish, mercenary views, which render the service less acceptable and comfortable. They esteem it their meat and drink to do his will.

Another thing expected from God's people is that they "keep his sabbath from polluting it." This is an essential character, a distinguishing mark, of good men. They reverence the impress of God upon that holy day. They consecrate it and set it apart to his service. They pursue no business and seek no pleasure that would be inconsistent with the holiness of the day, and hinder their faithful improvement of it. Those pollute the sabbath who make no distinction between that and common days; who perform their usual business upon it, or spend it in recreations, amusements and unprofitable converse. Whereas it ought to be employed in attending public worship, retiring afterward for reading, meditation, and prayer, and conversing on religious subjects. Sabbath sanctification is a necessary qualification of God's people; and they spend the whole of it in such a manner as hath a tendency to improve their own souls and their families in knowledge and goodness, and train them up for glory. To this also we are in a solemn manner to bind ourselves. Once more,

God's people "take hold of his covenant." They enter into serious, deliberate, solemn engagements to observe and keep his laws, in order to obtain the blessings which he hath promised; and which in so doing they cheerfully expect. They "take hold" of it; which implies a hearty consent to God's terms, a cheerful approbation and acceptance of them, and delight in them. It likewise implies a steady resolution. They take hold of it, as those who are unwilling and determined not to let it go. They labour to be ever mindful of it, to abide by it and retain it, as what is necessary to their security, repose, and everlasting felicity.

These, O my soul, are thy duties. I am very sensible I ought to perform some of them at the Lord's table, and to bind myself there to perform the rest every day. I have peculiar advantages

for doing this in an acceptable, edifying manner there. I come to recollect and acknowledge my being joined to the Lord, as one of his people; to express and cherish my love to him; to renew my hold of his covenant, and make a fresh surrender of myself to him as my covenant God. I come to commemorate the death of Christ, which was the seal of this covenant, and entitles me and all penitent believers to the inestimable blessings of it. I come to engage myself anew to serve the Lord, to be his faithful, obedient, perpetual servant; to cherish a sincere, warm affection to every thing that is divine; especially to keep his sabbaths, and love his ordinances, and cheerfully comply with every divine institution. Come, then, O my soul, and again "join thyself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which shall never be forgotten."

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been afresh joining ourselves to the Lord to love and serve him, and to keep his sabbaths. We have been again taking hold of his covenant with a sincere desire to comply with its demands, and a cheerful hope that we shall partake of its inestimable blessings. And now let us comfort and encourage ourselves with observing and remembering what God hath promised to those who do so. He will "accept their services," as he did the burnt-offerings and sacrifices of the pious Israelites, which were offered upon his altar. Our sacrifices of prayer and praise are pleasing in his sight. He will bestow upon us the blessings we have sought, and improve our graces by the religious exercises in which we have engaged. There can be no better evidence that God accepts them, than to find ourselves made better by them; more faithful, resolute, and cheerful in serving God, and doing good to our fellow-creatures. Our religious services will be comfortable to ourselves. God will make his devout worshippers "joyful in his house of prayer." God's church is a house of prayer. Our great business here is to supplicate mercy and grace. A sense of weakness, dependence, and guilt, if expressed before God with humility, repentance, and faith, will no way hinder our holy joy. It will lighten our burthens, take the load of guilt and grief from the mind, and fill it with joy and hope. Nothing so much tends at once to cheer and improve the spirit as devotion, especially the social exercises of it; particularly when at the Lord's supper we commemorate the death of Christ, by which the new covenant is sealed, and we are brought under the bonds, and entitled to the blessings of it. And let us reflect that all this is an earnest of something better hereafter. God will bring all his saints to his "holy mountain" above, to the heavenly Zion, "the new Jerusalem;" so called in allusion to the place of the Jewish solemnities. That is, indeed, "a holy mountain." None but

holy men shall possess it. There is no business, no entertainment, no delight there, but what is holy. Thither God will bring his faithful servants out of this land of absence and captivity; conducting them through innumerable difficulties and dangers, through legions of formidable enemies, and through the valley of death itself. Thither he will welcome them, and fix them as pillars in that house of prayer, to go out no more. There will he make them joyful with a rational, manly, divine, and everlasting joy; for "in his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

MEDITATION XXI.

Haggai ii. 7.

And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

When the Jews were redeemed from their captivity in Babylon, returned to Jerusalem, and much discouraged from rebuilding the temple there, by their low circumstances and the violence of their enemies, the prophet Haggai encourageth them by an assurance that the Messiah, who was "the desire of all nations," should come into that temple, and that God would fill it with glory. These words will suggest some suitable meditations on this occasion. The glory here spoken of was not any external splendour, pomp, and beauty; for in this respect, the second temple fell vastly short of Solomon's. It must therefore refer to the presence of Christ, his personal appearance again and again at the temple, which was a greater glory to it than any external ornaments could possibly be. Yet it was not the mere bodily presence of Christ which made the second temple more glorious than the first, but the heavenly doctrine which he preached, and the miracles which he wrought there, the pains he took to rescue the divine law from the corruptions of the Jewish teachers, and especially the spiritual blessings which he so freely offered to all who were willing to receive them. It was, in one word, the manifestation of the good will and mercy of God made by him, and the influences of his Spirit, which accompanied his preaching and miracles, to turn men from darkness to light, and bring them to repentance, faith, and holy obedience. This made his presence the glory of the second temple. Now from hence it is natural to infer,

That the brightest ornament and truest glory of any place of religious worship, is the spiritual presence of Christ in it; or in other words, the influences of his Spirit, accompanying the means of grace, to make them effectual for the edification and comfort of the souls of men. The plainest and meanest place of worship, in which there are the presence of Christ and the

beauty of holiness, is far superior to the most stately building, the most curious paintings and decorations without it. From hence we may further infer, that the great thing we should be solicitous about, as a Christian church, is, that we may have the special and gracious presence of Christ with us, to fill his house, where we assemble, with glory. The evidences of this presence are these. When the members of a Christian church are regular and careful in attending upon all the ordinances and institutions of Christ. When their behaviour in the house of God is decent, serious, and devout; when they worship the Father in spirit and in truth; when they sing his praises with understanding and lively devotion; when their attention to divine truths is fixed and their affections engaged; when they feel their whole souls filled with a sense of the important doctrines and facts which they contemplate, and entirely bowed to the authority of those laws which they here explained and enforced; particularly, when at the Lord's table their thoughts are fixed upon the sufferings and love of Christ, and their grateful affections excited towards him, who hath loved them and given himself for them; and when their souls are filled with love to all their fellow-Christians. It should be our earnest prayer, my brethren, that this may be more and more the character and honour of the church to which we stand related; that we may see and feel more of the power and glory of God in his sanctuary, and may each of us be a glory to it. We have encouragement to hope that this will be the case with us, since Christ hath promised to be with his ministers and churches "always, to the end of the world." He hath promised that his Spirit shall abide with them for ever, and that "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them." I rejoice (let us each say) in these gracious promises, and am thankful for them. It shall be my care, by a reverent, serious, devout behaviour in his house, and a holy, just, and unblameable conduct every where else, to invite his presence. I would be continually solicitous to avoid every thing that would be likely to deprive me of that presence, rob me of my brightest glory, the only valuable glory of the house of God. I would be thankful for this ordinance, where I have some peculiar advantages for having my thoughts directed to Christ, and fixed upon him. I see him here evidently set forth as crucified before my eyes. The benefits which I and my fellow-Christians enjoy by his death, are so great and so valuable, so numerous and so lasting, that, if I know any thing of their worth, and contemplate them with a devout spirit, he cannot but be the desire of my eyes, and the object of my sincere veneration and love. Here I have peculiar encouragement to expect his special presence, and to see his glory. This is what I ardently wish and pray for. Nor do I wish it for myself alone, but for all my fellow-Christians; especially those who

may assemble with me in his house, and join with me in this act of gratitude and allegiance. May he fill his house with his glory by filling all our hearts with joy and peace in believing, strengthening, and confirming our resolutions for his service, and making this ordinance the means of promoting our progress in holiness, and our meetness for the heavenly world!

AFTER PARTAKING.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" saith the devout psalmist. I hope this is often our language when we are going to the house of God, when we are engaged in the services of it, and when we are returned from it. We have reason to use this language with peculiar pleasure and gratitude, after we have been at the Lord's supper. Hath God this day filled his house with glory? Have we found such composure of thought, such joy in devout meditation, while we have been commemorating the death of Christ; and such warm resolutions for all holy obedience, as are the consequence and result of his presence with us? Our souls should magnify the grace of God who granteth us such invaluable favours. Let us strive to cherish the good impressions upon our hearts, and show in our whole conversation that we have not enjoyed the presence of Christ and received the grace of God in vain. Let us so behave that he may be with us in our family worship, and in our secret devotions; that our houses and our closets may be filled with glory; yea, that his grace may always be with our spirits, to enlighten, purify, and elevate them more and more. To encourage us to seek further manifestations of his presence and grace, and excite us most carefully to avoid every thing that would deprive us of such a blessing, let us frequently direct our views to God's house above; to the heavenly temple where Jesus Christ personally dwelleth, and displayeth his brightest glories. Let us contemplate the nobler scene of worship and enjoyment, where all his saints shall be with him to behold his glory; where they shall serve him and see his face, and reign for ever. Let the hope of being joined to that blessed society engage us to purify ourselves as Christ is pure; that when he shall appear, we may be like him, seeing him as he is.

MEDITATION XXII.

GALATIANS II. 20.

The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

THEY who have experienced the sanctifying effects of the gospel upon their own hearts (which I hope is the case of all who approach the Lord's table) will not wonder that I recommend to

them a constant care to maintain the exercises of faith in Christ, and to live daily under the influence of that sacred principle. It is suitable to the character and office of a minister of Christ, and suitable to the design of that ordinance. Indeed a better wish can scarcely be formed for you, than that you may be able in sincerity to adopt these words of the apostle. Let us meditate on his temper and conduct as living by the faith of Christ, and the reasons which led him so to live.

I. *Let us consider what the apostle means when he speaks of living by the faith of the Son of God.*

Now this plainly supposeth one leading, fundamental act of faith, by which the soul is committed to Christ. An awakened sinner, being apprehensive of his misery and danger, of his need of such a Saviour as Christ, being sensible of his power and grace, and earnestly desirous of salvation by him, believes and receives the report of the gospel concerning Christ, puts his soul under his protection, and seeks sanctification and salvation through him. But the expression of "living by the faith of the Son of God," implies what is the habitual temper of his soul, the continual exercise of faith consequent upon that solemn transaction at the first conversion of a sinner. The true Christian daily renews his views of Jesus Christ, and lives in the exercise of that faith which centres in him. He regards him as the object of his confidence; as his atoning sacrifice through whom he obtains pardon; as his advocate with the Father; as the guardian of his most important interests; as his head of influence, from whom all his spiritual wants are supplied. He hath a continued regard to Christ, as his example and Lord, the object of his imitation and obedience. This is consequent upon a true faith, or rather an essential branch of it. The Christian habitually regards Christ as his teacher, pattern, and governor; whose instructions he is to study, whose steps he is to follow, and whose laws he is to obey. He heartily consents that Christ should stand in these relations to him; and it is his desire and care to act suitably to them. In short, his whole life is conducted by the influence of faith. This high and noble principle actuates the Christian continually. This is agreeable to what the apostle commands, "Whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And it is agreeable to the apostle's own experience, "I live by the faith of the Son of God."

II. *Let us consider the reasons which led the apostle thus to live, or the arguments here suggested to dispose us to such a life.*

Perhaps one may be included in that phrase, "In the flesh." We are in flesh, we dwell in mortal bodies. The present state is a state of imperfection and temptation, of affliction and mortality. Now the best support under these evils is faith; faith in a mer-

ciful high priest, who knows our frame, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and will make his grace sufficient; who hath the keys of death, and is gone to prepare heavenly mansions for us. What is better adapted to encourage us under our imperfections, strengthen us under our temptations, comfort us under our afflictions, and reconcile us to the views of death? But there is a stronger argument contained in what follows, namely, that Christ "loved us;" and that to such a degree, that he "gave himself" up to shame and torture and death "for us." This is what faith chiefly fixeth upon. And this is both an obligation and an encouragement to live by faith. It is an obligation to such a life. For Christ by his death hath purchased a peculiar right to our trust, homage, and obedience. And he who feels the love of Christ in his heart, will not be unmindful of his constant concern with him, and will never neglect to live to him. It is also an encouragement to live by faith. Did Christ give himself for me? Surely he will not be displeased, that I fix the confidence of my soul upon him, and seek daily supplies of grace and strength through his hands. He will not cast me out when I come to him. He will not disappoint me in those hopes of salvation which he hath raised and confirmed by his death and resurrection, and is confirming to me daily by his word and ordinances. The institution now before us is of signal use to promote and cherish this life of faith. Here (will the Christian say) I see the Son of man lifted up. Here, as I am in the flesh, are sensible signs to fix my attention, to assist my devout meditation, and help my faith. Here I see, in the most striking point of view, how Christ loved me and gave himself for me. I am sensible that my immediate business at this ordinance is to remember Christ; to remind my soul of his death, and of my immense obligations to him, for his great love in giving himself a ransom for me. I am well pleased with and thankful for an institution which calls to my remembrance, and tends to impress more deeply upon my heart, the claim which he hath to my perpetual regard; to a whole life of gratitude and affection, of obedience and zeal. Here those views of Christ which are adapted to preserve and increase my faith are set before my mind, and will, I hope, leave strong and lasting impressions of my obligations to my affectionate Saviour, my dying Lord, and engage me to live and die to him.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been, I hope, gratefully and devoutly remembering Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself our us. And it should be our concern every day to retain and strengthen that remembrance; to reflect often and very seriously on what he hath done for us, and what a dependence we have upon him. Did we live more by the faith of the Son of God, we should feel a more

ardent love to the blessed God for this unspeakable gift, this method of salvation. We should be more serious and lively in all the duties of religion; more indifferent to this vain world; more circumspect and holy in all our conversation; more useful in our stations; more charitable and benevolent to our fellow-Christians, and more comfortable in our own souls. Let me in this connexion solemnly caution you against an error, too common among Christians, especially in the present age, namely, imagining that they have little to do immediately with our Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be the object of our constant regard, especially as our teacher, propitiation, and advocate with the Father; and as our strength, through whom we can do all things. Let us endeavour to live more by that principle which animated the great apostle to all his labours and sufferings, and made him so bright an example of the most eminent virtue and goodness. To this faith he ascribed all his attainments in piety, holiness, and benevolence; his superiority to all the allurements and terrors of the world; his ardent zeal to save souls, and his readiness to suffer affliction, persecution, and death, in the cause of his great master. And let us daily pray for a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to attract our hearts to him, and to fix our views upon him. And may Christ "dwell in our hearts by faith;" and may this faith be a principle of sincere obedience, a source of perpetual consolation; and an assurance and earnest of our complete felicity in being ever with the Lord!

MEDITATION XXIII.

Psalm ciii. 1, 2.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

The Lord's supper hath been called by several names. By the ancient Christians among the Greeks, it was called "the eucharist," or the thanksgiving; because our Lord, when he instituted it, gave thanks to his Father; and Christians, when they partake of it, join in a solemn act of thanksgiving to God for the blessings represented and confirmed by it. There is no disposition more proper at that ordinance than a grateful one; none better suited to its nature, or more likely to make it comfortable to us, while we partake of it, and of greater advantage to us in the course of our lives. Let me therefore now exhort you to adopt the devout and grateful language of David in the words before us; where he calls upon "his soul, and all that was within him," all his powers and affections, "to bless the holy name of the Lord." I would suggest a few thoughts to assist your meditation and excite your gratitude at this ordinance.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, for his pity and love to the sinful children of men; that while he passed by those nobler beings, the angels that fell, he had compassion on a world of mortal men, who lay in wickedness. Behold the goodness and severity of God: to them, awful but righteous severity; to us, undeserved goodness. It might have been just the reverse; goodness to them and just severity to us. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for sending his glorious gospel to this part of the world; formerly a dark and brutish part, an inhospitable and barbarous nation, despised by the Romans and other civilized nations as the dregs of the human species. That he hath continued this gospel amongst us, and appointed our existence to begin in a happy land, and in the happiest period of time which that land ever knew. That we are not, like the heathen nations, strangers to Christ and his blessings and ordinances, eating the sacrifices of the dead, feasting at the table and drinking the cup of demons, and defiling ourselves with cruel and inhuman sacrifices. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for this ordinance, and liberty and ability to attend upon it and join in it; an ordinance, admirably fitted to help our devotion, to inflame our love, and to quicken us to all holy obedience; an ordinance in which we see that everlasting covenant sealed and ratified, as it were, before our eyes; which giveth the assurance of pardon, peace, and eternal life to every humble, penitent believer. Bless the Lord that such an ordinance was instituted, that it hath been transmitted down to us, and not lost in so many ages of darkness, tumult, and contention. Let us bless him that we enjoy it in its purity; that it is not turned into an idolatrous service, nor represented to us as a charm, or an indulgence for the neglect of our duty. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for the public liberty which thou and thy fellow-subjects are favoured with; that thou canst, by the laws of our country, and under the protection of our governors, celebrate this ordinance in our solemn assemblies, without fear of death, imprisonment, or fine. Bless the Lord that thy lot is cast in peaceful times, in which thou canst go to the house and table of the Lord, and perform the services of both, in that manner which seems to to thee most agreeable to the primitive institution, none making thee afraid. Bless the Lord, O my soul, that no domestic calamity, no painful affliction, confines me from this ordinance; that I do not look upon it with contempt or even indifference, and live in the neglect of it, as too many do; that I do not omit my attendance upon it when Providence gives me an opportunity of obeying this command of my divine Master. Bless the Lord that I have, as Ezra expresseth it, "a nail in God's holy place;" my lot among his servants and people, and esteem it my great privilege and honour, as well as duty, to walk in all his ordinances, as far as may be, blameless. Bless the Lord, O my soul, that I do not come to this ordinance with the terrors of a slave,

that my heart is not filled with bitterness, suspicion, or tormenting fear, which would deprive me of all the pleasure and advantage of an attendance upon it; that I can attend it with the affection, dutifulness, hope, and joy of a grateful and obedient child. Or, though I should, through a mistaken notion of the ordinance or of my own character and state, come with weakness and fear, yet there is sufficient ground to hope for acceptance, if my heart is right with God; if I sincerely desire to yield myself to him, and to walk as becometh the gospel. I must add,

Let us bless the Lord with all that is within us, for those that join with us in this service; that we meet so many of our brethren and Christian friends at this table, joining in the same act of homage, self-dedication, love, and hope. Let us bless the Lord that he addeth to his church such as shall be saved. That we can look with pleasure on any young Christians coming to fill up their fathers' places; entering into their services and labours, and joining themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten. How delightful a sight to all the real friends of Christ and religion! And what an encouragement doth it give them to hope and believe that he will still have a seed to serve him in the place where we have so often remembered and celebrated his love, and had reason to say, "It is good to be here!"

These are the benefits which we should recollect and celebrate at this ordinance. And if there be any thing particularly merciful in our private circumstances and connexions, or in the state and frame of our own souls, it will be proper to acknowledge it before God with real gratitude. And we should consider it as a further obligation upon us to be the Lord's; and devote all our powers, abilities, and enjoyments, to his service. Let us enlarge upon these particulars in our private meditation while we are engaged in that service, and join heartily in a solemn thanksgiving to God for all his benefits, especially for Christ, that unspeakable gift.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We read (1 Kings viii. 66) that after Solomon and all Israel had held a feast before the Lord their God, when the people were dismissed, "they went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people." They traced up all their national and religious privileges to God as the author of them. They considered them as the effects and displays of his goodness. That goodness they had thankfully acknowledged by their sacrifices and their praises. And they went home with joyfulness and gladness, under a grateful sense of the favours which had been bestowed upon them. This suggests to us our duty, after we have been keeping this feast to the Lord, and

celebrating his manifold favours vouchsafed to us. We ought to carry away with us a thankful, devout sense of his goodness, and to cherish and manifest religious gratitude and joy continually. If we are truly sensible of our obligations to him for his invaluable and innumerable benefits, we shall not rest in a bare acknowledgment of them, but shall inquire, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his mercies?" We shall be careful and solicitous never to affront, neglect, or even forget, that friend, to whose compassion and love we are so highly obliged; that God, who hath given us his dear Son, so many valuable favours contained in that one; and will, with him and through him, give us all things needful and desirable for us. Let us ever bear this upon our minds, that it is our duty to "render to the Lord according to the benefits we have received." Let us be solicitous and strive earnestly to do so. This will support and increase our joy in the Lord, and give us some lively foretaste of that eternal glory in which all the divine benefits are designed to terminate, and which will be the delightful subject of our eternal praises.

MEDITATION XXIV.

Isaiah xxv. 6.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

These words afford us a suitable subject for our meditation at the Lord's supper. For they evidently refer to, and are a prophecy of, the blessings of the gospel, and the gracious provision which God, our indulgent Father, hath made by Jesus Christ, for the support and consolation of his people. Our Lord represents the privileges and comforts of the gospel under the same image; as a feast, a marriage-feast; particularly one which a great king made for the marriage of his son, and invited the guests to partake of his oxen and fatlings, and other dainties which he had prepared (Matt. xxii. 1, &c.). Let us dwell a little on this beautiful description, and may God enable us to draw instruction and consolation from it! In this mountain, i. e. mount Zion, which represents the gospel church, or the state into which Christians are now brought, this feast is made.

The founder of it is "the Lord of hosts;" the infinite and eternal Jehovah, who is possessed of unlimited power over all creatures, maketh what use of them he pleaseth, and is able to satisfy the largest desires of his servants. He makes a feast for them, not like Ahasuerus, to display his magnificence and the

glorious majesty of his kingdom, but to display his bounty and goodness, his tender pity and love for starving, perishing souls. Jesus is the Master of the feast, who presides over the entertainment, sits down as it were with the guests, to make them welcome, and to distribute the favours which divine bounty hath prepared. Let us attend to the matter or provision of the feast. It is here described by those supplies for the body which were reckoned most valuable and delicious among the Jewish people; "fat things full of marrow, wine on the lees well refined," that had stood long on the lees, was grown strong, and then well refined from the dregs. This intimates, that the entertainment which God hath provided for his servants is the best of the kind, the most valuable dainties. The expression of a feast intimates the abundance and variety of the provision made; suited to the grandeur and dignity of the founder of it, and his kindness to his guests. Now all this refers to the ordinances, privileges, and promises of the gospel; to our admittance into God's family; to the pardon of sin, peace and reconciliation with God; more especially to the influences of the Spirit, and those assistances, consolations, and hopes which he communicates to true believers; all of which are to end in everlasting life and happiness. The Lord's supper naturally conveys the idea of a feast. It sets before us those blessings as in a rich variety, and under the most affecting emblems. It represents them as sufficient to supply the necessities, and satisfy the desires of our souls. By a serious approach to this ordinance we may hope to have "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," and to have our love and zeal, our hope and joy increased, and our resolutions for the service of God established. This feast is abundantly more excellent than common entertainments. It is a feast for the soul, pure and refined, nourishing the divine life, and strengthening every grace. Here is no danger of excess. We may "feed ourselves without fear," which to do, in an entertainment for the body, is represented by St. Jude as the character and mark of worthless and abandoned sinners; and, in all cases, it is pernicious both to body and mind. To this feast all are invited. God sends his invitation, not as men do, to the rich and the great, or their relations and friends alone; but to the poor, the lame, and the blind; to those who have been enemies and rebels. It is a feast, as the prophet observes, "for *all* people," Gentiles as well as Jews, the poor as well as the rich. The Lord of hosts invites them to come. Yea, he commands his ministers, by all persuasive arguments, to "compel them to come in, that his house may be filled with guests." What his servants here partake of, though excellent and delightful in itself, is but an earnest of something better, a foretaste of perfect and everlasting pleasure.

I would now draw near to this feast of love, with the highest reverence, the deepest gratitude, and the most fervent love to the founder of it. I would come with holy joy in God and in the Redeemer; and, according to the divine command, "keep his solemn feasts with gladness." I am sensible that a fearful, dejected spirit would be an affront to his kind condescension, and to his plentiful and excellent provision. I know that a gloomy countenance would be uncivil to my fellow-Christians, who are guests with me at the divine banquet. It may tend to discourage those, who are younger, and in some respects weaker than myself; and especially those who may not yet have joined in this ordinance, but may be spectators of our manner of receiving it. I would endeavour to banish all the fears, sorrows, and cares of my mind, from a place and a service consecrated to God, to religion, and to joy. I desire and labour to approach this sacred feast, having on the wedding-garment: that is, with fixed attention, with a spiritual appetite, and longing desire; with deep humility, firm faith, ardent love, and cheerful hope. I have been labouring and praying that these several graces may be in lively exercise at this feast of love. I hope I feel in my heart, and desire to feel more of a pure and fervent affection to all my Christian brethren, who are guests with me at the heavenly banquet, and alike partakers of my Father's love. It is my desire and concern that my soul may be nourished and strengthened by it; that I may grow thereby, and be fitted for all the duties, services, and sufferings of future life. But as "man liveth not by bread alone, but by the word of God," or that blessing which he commandeth on our provision, I have already in sincerity sought his assistance, and would heartily join my fellow-Christians in devout addresses to him, that he would, according to his promise, "bless the provisions of his house," and satisfy our souls with the bread of life.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We read in the history of Elijah, that when he was travelling through the wilderness, God made him a miraculous feast. A cake and water were provided for him, and we are told (1 Kings xix. 8), that "he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat to Horeb the mount of God." This passage may suggest some useful instruction to us. The true end of eating and drinking should be to fit us for the duties of life, and strengthen us for the service of God. And all the nourishment and vigour we derive from our food should be faithfully employed for him. In like manner, the spiritual provision of which we have now been partaking was intended and is adapted to strengthen us for our Christian work, for our journey through this wilderness. It becomes us to lift up our feet in the ways of God, and proceed vigorously and cheerfully

in the strength we derive from this service. Let us gird up the loins of our minds, and resolutely and cheerfully spring forward to all the duties, difficulties, and sufferings of life. Keep "the mount of God," the heavenly hill, always in your eye, and be continually pressing on towards it; taking your directions and encouragements from the word of God, which endureth for ever, and will make you wise to everlasting salvation. Be continually looking to Jesus for grace and strength sufficient for you. Then will you at length safely and comfortably arrive at the heavenly mountain, and "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and all the prophets and saints, at "the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

MEDITATION XXV.

2 Chronicles xv. 15.

And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them; and the Lord gave them rest round about.

We approach the table of the Lord to make a public profession of our faith in Christ and his gospel; to show that we are Christians, which no other religious act so properly and effectually proves. It is our intention likewise to consecrate ourselves again to the service of God, through his Son Jesus Christ, and to renew our solemn engagements to walk worthy of the gospel which we profess. It is proper that we should, on that occasion, be reminded, with what temper this transaction should be performed, and this memorial of the love of Christ and of our obligations celebrated. The passage now before us, from the Old Testament history, may give us some assistance on this point, and furnish us with some encouragement in what we are doing. The people of Judah under Asa their king, had obtained a glorious victory over their enemies; and by the direction and encouragement of Azariah the prophet, had put away their idolatry, and renewed their solemn engagements to serve the God of Israel alone, and be faithful in observing his law. After they had offered a large sacrifice, they entered into covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul, and solemnly swore to be faithful to this covenant. Then the historian tells us that they "rejoiced in the oath," and gives us the reason why they did so. Observe,

I. *The solemn engagement into which they entered, and the temper they manifested therein.*

They bound themselves to nothing new; nothing but what they were previously obliged to, as "the Israel of God;" nothing

but what his law required. It was to "seek the Lord God of their fathers;" a phrase comprehending the whole of religion, and especially all the duties of piety. They engaged to pray to God, to give thanks to him, and to serve him only; to maintain continued communion with him in the public and private exercises of devotion; to inquire after him, to study and learn his will, to cleave to him, and obey all his laws and institutions. And they swore to do this, that is, they in the presence of God solemnly professed themselves obliged to do it; declaring that they expected no favour and blessing from him, if they neglected it. Further, they entered into this engagement with great sincerity and with great cheerfulness. With great sincerity. They sought God "with their whole desire." Their souls were intent upon what they were about, and entirely devoted to him. They swore with all their hearts, without any dissembling, or secret reserve in favour of any idol, any sin. And they did it with cheerfulness and joy. They swore to the Lord "with a loud voice" (v. 14), with shouting and the sound of musical instruments. They were not backward to own their relation to him, and their engagements to be his servants. They were neither ashamed nor afraid that all about them should know what they believed, professed, and vowed. They all "rejoiced in the oath;" not looking upon it as a grievous burden; not esteeming the work, which they were to perform for God, a task and a drudgery, but a most reasonable and delightful service. Each rejoiced that he was more firmly than ever bound to the Lord; and they rejoiced to see their brethren engaged in the same glorious cause, and brought under the same solemn vows.

With such a temper as this should we give up ourselves to the Lord. This ordinance is a sacrament, or a religious oath, by which we devote ourselves to God through Christ, and profess subjection, allegiance, and obedience to him. We are before bound to these, as reasonable creatures, and as Christians. But by taking upon us these engagements in a public solemn manner, we do a public honour to God and the Redeemer. We bear an open testimony to the reasonableness, equity, and goodness of his precepts. We strengthen our conviction of the obligations we are under to obedience, and lay in a fresh security against our many temptations to apostasy, backsliding, and declension in religion. This important service we are to perform sincerely and cheerfully, with all our hearts and with our whole desire; sincerely, as those who have to do with God, "whose eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men," who "loveth righteousness and beholdeth the upright alone with delight." This likewise we are to do cheerfully; without force or any constraint; pleased to obey the command of Jesus our Lord, and to give every proof of our love and devotedness to him who hath

bought us with his blood, and hath an incontestible right to our affection, service, and obedience. Let us consider,

II. *The happy consequence of Judah's solemn engagements.*

"The Lord was found of them." He heard their prayers, and granted their desires. He accepted their services, and the surrender which they had made of themselves to him. He gave them some sensible tokens of his favour; perhaps by consuming their sacrifices with fire from heaven; a usual sign of his approbation of such offerings. By the secret workings of his Spirit upon their hearts, he filled them with peace, hope, and joy. It is added, "He gave them rest round about;" secured them from the attempts of their enemies, and established their national peace.

Now if we with sincerity and cheerfulness again devote ourselves to God and his service, we have the strongest assurance that he will be found of us; that he will accept our bodies and souls, as living sacrifices presented to him. He will grant us the influences of his Spirit, to confirm our pious purposes, and assist us in the execution of them. He will favour us with such prosperity in our Christian work and warfare, as will be the best reward of our uprightness and fidelity. He will likewise give us rest. We are not indeed under a temporal covenant, as the Israelites were. Therefore a continued rest from public enemies is not to be expected, except the general character of the nation was pious and good. Nor will he give us entire rest from the attacks and molestations of spiritual enemies; for by them the Lord trieth and confirmeth the righteous. But he will assist us in our conflicts with them, bruise Satan under our feet, and make us more than conquerors. We shall have rest and peace in Christ, and be "filled with joy and hope in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost." He will at length bring us to that "rest which remaineth to the people of God," where there will be no enemy, temptation, or alarm, but perfect, uninterrupted peace, and everlasting joy. Let us then draw near with true hearts, and the full assurance of faith. Let us renew our engagement to be the Lord's with all our heart, and seek him with our whole desire; and we may be assured that he will be found of us.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been commemorating the death of Christ, the great sacrifice; professing before God that we are his servants, and reminding our souls of the obligations and engagements we are under to be wholly and for ever his. Let me then address you in the words of the psalmist (1 Chron. xvi. 15), "Be ye ever mindful of his covenant." Having given a fresh pledge and assurance of your fidelity and obedience, be careful to "hold

fast the profession of your faith without wavering." Labour to behave like those who are under the solemn obligations of the everlasting covenant, and who know and experience its firm support and divine consolations. God hath for our encouragement been pleased to enter into engagements with us, and permitted and invited us to join ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten. Let us remember that he will ever be mindful of his promises, and that he observeth and remembereth how we fulfil ours. Let us imitate God, and be faithful to them. Shall any of us act as if we were ashamed of what we had done? and if we were desirous to be set free from our engagements, or to be tolerated in the violation of them? Shall we act as if we thought the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? Shall we falsify our word, renounce what we profess to esteem all our salvation, and declare to be all our desire? God forbid! Let us show a becoming trust, a full confidence in our covenant God in every circumstance of life and death; and be faithful to the end. Then shall we have reason to "rejoice in the oath;" to rejoice in it amidst all the afflictions and sorrows of life, and under the attacks of death itself. For we are assured that "his covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing which hath gone out of his lips." We shall have eternal reason to acknowledge, that "not one good word hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath promised" to do for his people.

MEDITATION XXVI.

Acts iii. 26.

Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

St. Peter is in these words addressing the Jews. He had informed them of several important particulars concerning the condemnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had called upon them to "repent and be converted;" encouraging them by an assurance of pardon. He had reminded them of the covenant which God made with their fathers, in which he promised the Messiah, in whom they were to be blessed. And then he adds, that "unto them first, God had sent Jesus," &c. Here are several important particulars which deserve our consideration, especially at the Lord's supper. God "raised up his Son Jesus." He was the Son of God in a peculiar sense; the only begotten of the Father; so as no other being could be. And he was raised up, from the seed of Abraham, and out of the family of David, according to the flesh, as the Jewish prophets foretold. He was employed as the messenger of his Father's

will, and sent by him into the world. The word "raised up," according to some interpreters, may refer to his being raised from the dead, though it is not the word generally used for that event in the New Testament. After he had been crucified and slain, God raised him from the dead, and thereby declared him to be his Son, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world. Further, he was "sent to bless" men. A most kind and merciful design! Not to condemn the world as it deserved, but to bless it: to confer inestimable favours upon men, and to make all his faithful disciples truly and eternally happy. He preached the gospel of salvation himself, and offered the most valuable blessings to a sinful world. He preached it by his Spirit, inspiring the holy apostles; and that Spirit was communicated to the church, as a most important and desirable mercy. Jesus is sent likewise to us. We are favoured with his word, with the messages of salvation, with the labours of his ministers, with his holy ordinances; and thus we are blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. But he was first sent to the Jews; "To you first." The gospel was, by Christ's express command, preached first at Jerusalem by the apostles. It was necessary, as St. Paul told the Jews at Antioch, that "the word of God should have been first spoken to them." It was offered by the apostles first to the Jews, in every place where they came. It was surprising grace that it should be offered to the Jews at all, who had rejected, blasphemed, and killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples with the greatest rage and bitterness; especially that it should be sent to them first. But this was wisely ordered on many accounts; as it fulfilled their ancient prophecies; as they were the best judges of some of the evidences produced for it; as they were descended from the holy patriarchs, with whom the covenant of grace was made; especially as, by being first offered to them, encouragement is afforded to the worst of sinners to receive and embrace it.

The grand design of our Redeemer's coming, his death and resurrection, was to turn men from their iniquities; or, as the words may be rendered, "to bless every one that turneth from his iniquity." To be turned from the love and practice of sin is a great blessing. To be turned from our own iniquity, from the sin that easily besets us, is better than the greatest abundance of earthly comforts. All other blessings are connected with this. Communion with God, peace of conscience, consolation under affliction, and the hopes of glory, are all founded on our being pardoned and sanctified. These are blessings in which all true Christians are interested. To "turn every one of you." Not one soul can be blessed that is not turned from iniquity; and every soul that is turned shall inherit the blessing. Every real Christian is desirous to have his iniquities subdued, to hate and avoid every sin. So that if we could suppose that one was to

be allowed an exemption from this change, and to be tolerated in the practice of his iniquities, he would at once say, Lord, I would not be that one. I should think such an indulgence the greatest calamity; for I already know what an evil and bitter thing sin is. Let us rejoice in this, that the gospel is designed and adapted to free men from the dominion of sin, and that our Lord was called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins.

The Lord's supper is a means by which he subdues the iniquity of his people; both as it is a representation of his death, and a memorial of the covenant of grace sealed with his blood. It is a representation of the death and sufferings of Christ. We see the Son of God dying for our sins, and our iniquities laid upon him. What can be more natural and reasonable than such a reflection as this? Shall I have any thing more to do with sin? Did it please the Lord to bruise his Son, and make his soul an offering for sin? And shall I be fond of so evil a thing? Shall I harbour and caress the murderer of my Lord, and indulge what will be bitterness in the end? Here we commemorate the sacrifice which Christ offered for sin, and by which the influences of the Spirit were obtained, to assist us in turning from every iniquity. Further, the Lord's supper is a memorial of the covenant of grace confirmed by the blood of Christ. We remember that death which sealed the covenant, or grant of blessings, with which God hath favoured us. Hence we derive a lively hope of pardoning mercy and assisting grace. We profess to renounce all sin, and to accept salvation upon gospel terms. We make no exception for our own iniquity. We desire no indulgence for any favourite, any long cherished lust. We resolve to level our attempts principally against that, and to turn from it with abhorrence. Our language, I hope, is this, Lord I can truly say that it is my desire to have every sin subdued, and to turn from every iniquity. I have found this ordinance, in former instances, the means of increasing my detestation of that which is evil. I hope this attendance upon it will improve the conquest which I have already obtained over the power of sin, and that by fresh views of a crucified Saviour I shall gain further dominion over this inbred, this inveterate enemy; and greater strength and courage and success in resisting every temptation, and obeying the whole will of God.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When we have been commemorating the death of Christ, and recollecting the great design of it, namely, to turn men from their iniquities, we cannot express ourselves in more proper terms, and form a better resolution, than Job did (ch. xxxiv. 32): "What I see not, teach thou me; wherein I have done iniquity I will do no more." To confirm such a resolution, let us keep this idea of sin always in our minds; that it was the cause of

our Lord's death. How odious were the characters of Judas, of Caiaphas and Pilate, who were the instruments of his death? How infamous would it have been for any Christian to have formed a friendship with either of them! And is it less so to be confederate with sin? to nourish such a viper in our bosom, and not oppose and crush it with all our might? You may judge of your interest in Christ, and title to the blessings he hath purchased for his people, by the relish you have for this truth, that he came to "turn men from their iniquities." If you do not reckon this a most important and delightful truth; if you do not heartily resolve to do no more iniquity; if you do not labour daily and with all your might to subdue and mortify every sin; you have no part in these blessings. But if you do so, if you are made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, and have your fruit unto holiness, be assured that the end will be everlasting life. Jesus will bless you yet further in this world with all needful grace and consolation, and at length bestow upon you that best of blessings, even life for evermore.

MEDITATION XXVII.

Revelation vii. 14.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

When we see others suffering some heavy affliction, or are suffering it ourselves, it is a pleasure to think that there is a future state; that good men, when they die, do not lose their existence, but are conveyed to a better world, in which their pollutions shall all be removed, and no tribulation shall ever approach them. So great is the glory then to be conferred upon unworthy creatures, that St. John, when he had a vision of it, might naturally ask with some surprise, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" The angel informs the apostle that they "came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Christians owe their future happiness to the sufferings and death of Christ. Such expressions are not designed to exclude his active obedience, his observance of the moral law, and perfect compliance with every part of the will of God. The whole of his conduct was pleasing to the Father, and by his obedience as well as by his sufferings we are made righteous. But when we consider how much is said of his suffering and dying, of our being justified and saved by his death, it seems evidently to import, that peculiar stress is laid upon this; both as the

most signal act of obedience, and as a real sacrifice or propitiation for the sins of the world.

I. *We have here an account of the sufficiency and efficacy of his sacrifice and atonement.*

Christians are at present justified by his blood: that is, brought into a state of favour and privilege. They are entitled to pardon, assistance, and consolation, upon their compliance with the terms of his gospel. But the efficacy of his sacrifice extendeth further. By means of it holy souls are advanced to the heavenly world; for he hath "obtained eternal redemption for them." The blood of bulls and goats only cleansed from legal, ceremonial, external pollution. It did not remove moral guilt. It exempted transgressors of the law from temporal punishment, threatened by Jehovah, as the God of Israel and their king; not from his displeasure, as the righteous governor of the universe; for in both these respects he was to be considered. But "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." He saves the chief of sinners, upon their repentance and faith, from the punishment, guilt, and dominion of sin, and conducts them to a state of everlasting purity and joy. Further,

II. *The words intimate that the best of men stand in need of this blood to purify them and fit them for glory.*

The persons here spoken of "came out of great tribulation." They had suffered much affliction and persecution, but they maintained their integrity. Their virtues were more valuable in themselves and held in higher estimation by their gracious Lord and judge, than the virtues of those who had an easier passage through life: for they brought more honour to Christ, and did more service to his religion. Some of these distinguished personages had died martyrs for him, and sealed his truth with their blood. Yet it is not said they made their robes white in their own blood, but in that of the Lamb. They humbly acknowledged themselves unprofitable servants. They relied on his atonement and intercession for their pardon, acceptance, and salvation; and so obtained these invaluable blessings. Nay it is not said that some of them were saved in this method, but *all* of them; the purest as well as those who had been most polluted: those who had done most for the Redeemer's service and glory as well as others. All are redeemed and saved by the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish; and all are accepted in the beloved.

How thankful should we be, my brethren, for the tidings of a Redeemer! How precious should he be to our souls! To have procured glory for such a sinner as I am, at any rate would have rendered him the worthy object of my gratitude and love. But to procure it at so expensive a rate, by his own blood, this

is love surpassing human love, surpassing knowledge. I would celebrate and magnify it. I would adore the wisdom which contrived this most wonderful and gracious scheme. I would pay my highest honours and praises to the blessed God, who subjected his Son to pain, and shame, and death. He did this that an honourable way might be made for my obtaining pardon and peace now, and being brought into the possession of this dignity and felicity. And should not my dependence be upon the blood of the Lamb, as the dependence of these glorified saints was? I must not, I dare not expect salvation through the merit of my own obedience, or as a reward which my works have deserved. Alas! I have reason to be overwhelmed with terror, under a sense of pollution, guilt, and unworthiness. If God were to lay open to me the records of my own conscience, and particularly set my sins in order before me from the records of his omniscience, nothing but terror and despair would seize me. But I am accepted, and hope to join this illustrious band of conquerors, through the worthiness and grace of the Captain of my salvation. I hope I am willing, pleased, and thankful to receive mercy in this way. I cheerfully submit to the terms which my most indulgent Father hath proposed. This will tend to keep me humble, to endear unto me the blessings I want, and excite my most fervent gratitude for that mercy which bestoweth them.

Under the influence of these sentiments, and with these dispositions, let us approach the sacred table. Our hearts, it is to be hoped, are purged from allowed sin and an evil conscience. Our lives are unblameable, and honourable to our profession; and our resolutions for improvement and perseverance in religion sincere and firm. Here the Lamb of God is "set forth before our eyes crucified among us." We behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord our God maketh with us, and cheerfully consent to all the demands of it. We see the tokens and pledges of pardon, and peace, and salvation. Let us draw near with gratitude and sanctity of heart, to celebrate and adore that love to which we owe all that we have and all that we expect.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When Solomon had been describing the uncertainty of all things here below, the near approach of death, and its breaking off all the business and schemes of the present life, he says (Eccl. ix. 8), "Let thy garments be always white;" endeavour to live as easily and pleasantly, and as free from anxiety, as thou canst. For white garments were used by the easterns at seasons of victory, joy, and festivity. This advice is very proper to be attended to by us, after the view we have been taking of the grace of God and our Saviour, and of the inestimable

blessings reserved for us in the future state; and when we have been renewing and confirming our resolutions for his service. "Let thy garments be always white;" that is, live comfortably and cheerfully. Let every day be a festival to thee. Let thy whole conduct show that thy God daily furnisheth thee with a source of consolation and pleasure. Endeavour always to wear a cheerful aspect and to rejoice evermore. Labour to keep a clear conscience, and to live near to God; and so inward peace and solid hope will be secured and maintained. Let the prospect of heavenly glory as obtained by the blood of Christ, animate the Christian to rejoice evermore, yea even in tribulation and in death itself. Unbelieving fears will sometimes be ready to arise. He may find it difficult to believe that he shall ever partake of a happiness so great and glorious, so far above his deserts. But when he considers it as obtained for him through the sufferings of the Lamb, in consequence of the wise and gracious appointment of his God and Father, this helps his unbelief, and raiseth him above his fears. Heaven is not a state too glorious and excellent to be expected, when considered in this light. How willing should the Christian be to leave this world, where he is daily contracting fresh spots amidst all his care and watchfulness, and to enter on a state of everlasting purity! If the holy souls who came out of great tribulation were enabled to conquer death when it approached them in its most terrible form, how unreasonable is it for us to start back at its milder approaches! We should rather be ready to welcome its sharpest pains, as opening our way to God and Christ and eternal glory. Let us often be looking within the veil; taking a prospect of the heavenly world and its blessed inhabitants, and observing those in particular who have "come out of great tribulation." Ere long we shall know its happiness; not as now, by a distant prospect, and by ideas taken from earthly princes and conquerors, which strike our mind at present with pleasurable sensations; but in a clear and full manner. There let us have our conversation. Let our hearts and affections be much above. And in the prospect of this glory and dignity, let us often say now, as we shall at length join with that great multitude in saying, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God even his Father, unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

MEDITATION XXVIII.

John xiv. 23.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

This is the answer which our Lord returned to one of his apostles, who asked him, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not to the world?" Is not thine to be a public appearance? To this Christ answers, that whosoever truly loveth him will keep his words; and the consequence of this will be, that the Father will love him, and both Father and Son will come and make their abode with him. Now here we are taught,

I. *How our love to Christ is to be expressed and manifested.* "He will keep my words."

It is natural to suppose that one whose character was so spotless and amiable as that of Christ, and who was so great a friend and benefactor to mankind, would be at least esteemed by all who hear of him; and that many would profess to love him. But he puts the sincerity of that profession on this plain evidence, "He will keep my words." He will be desirous to know them; will carefully examine and study them; and receive them with meek submission of soul. He will retain them in his memory and his heart, and often reflect upon them. He will always act from a reverence to my authority, and with an humble submission to my commands. Where real love to Christ is, obedience will naturally follow. This will be a commanding, constraining principle. The very thought, This is Christ's word; this is my Saviour's command, will be enough to engage the obedience of every Christian who loveth him. He will need no other motive to a cheerful observance of every sacred injunction.

II. *We have here the happy effect of this love, considered as a principle of obedience.* "My Father will love him, and we will come and dwell with him."

God will love the obedient Christian. To be beloved of God is the highest happiness we can attain. It includes every thing great, and good, and desirable. It is amazing condescension and grace, that the almighty, self-sufficient, and eternal Father should love a mean, sinful worm; whose love to him is so weak at the best, and whose obedience is so imperfect and defective. But this he will do; and love him in such a manner as to become his invariable friend. He will love, not merely the most eminent saints, but every sincere lover of Christ. What a consolation is this to me! (may the Christian say.) Let men cen-

sure and slight me; yea let all the rage of earth and hell be united against me; if God loveth me, it is enough. Nothing can hurt me; nothing can separate me from his love. Nothing can prevent my complete happiness. Our Lord adds, "We will come unto him," both I and my Father. They will come to him by the communication of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten his mind, to enliven his graces, to help his infirmities, to assist him in meditation, prayer, and thanksgiving, and in the performance of every duty; to clear up his evidences and fill him with joy and peace. Blessed Jesus! I long for such gracious visits. Welcome indeed wilt thou and thy Father be to my soul. There is nothing I desire more than this display of the divine love. It is added further, "We will make our abode with him;" dwell statedly with him; not as a traveller, who turneth aside to tarry for a night, but continually, and with complacency, as at home. This crowns all; as it denotes a constant fellowship; a regular, spiritual, delightful correspondence. And have we not experienced something of this, my fellow-Christians? Had not God been with us, we had drooped and perished long ago; or have continued in that unsettled, formal state of religion in which we have the grief to see so many others continue. Or we should so far have lost our first love, as to neglect this sacred ordinance, on which we now attend with pleasure. We hope and believe he will abide with us for ever. We are ready to say, Lord, they were happy whom thou didst visit in the days of thy flesh. How should we have rejoiced in such an honour, have ever loved the house in which we had seen thee, the room in which we had conversed with thee! But Christ would have answered, as he did the woman who said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee;" "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Let this be our care. Then will he dwell with us. And Lord, if thou dwellest with me, it matters little where and with whom I dwell. Thy presence and love will make up the want of human friendship in its sweetest endearments. Lord, I am now going to this ordinance, thou knowest, with a heart that truly loves thee, and in obedience to thy own command. I am approaching it with a desire, purpose, and resolution, not only to know, but to keep thy word. May I there experience that thou art with me, and may my love to thee be cherished and strengthened by the views I am to take of thy amazing kindness and grace to me!

AFTER PARTAKING.

St. Paul concludes his epistle to the Ephesians with these remarkable words, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, amen;" who have a real uncorrupted love to him; a love which continues constant, so as not to be corrupted by any of the allurements of the world and the flesh;

by any temptations to which we may be exposed. With such persons grace shall be; that is, the divine favour and all the blessings which result from it. In the assurance of this, take the utmost pains to "continue in Christ's love," and "keep his words." To him carefully devote your time, your abilities, your substance. Daily and fervently pray for larger communications of his love to your souls. Guard continually against every thing that would weaken this principle in you; especially an inordinate, unreasonable love to any creature; an immoderate care and solicitude about any worldly interest, and impatience and discontent under the evils of the present state. Let us look and long for the time when we shall know him better, get nearer to him, see him as he is, and have nothing to divert our affection from him. There we shall find that affection continually increasing as our acquaintance with him increaseth, and as we receive more direct and delightful communications from him. He will abide with us for ever, and we shall dwell with him and his Father in everlasting honour and joy. Amen.

MEDITATION XXIX.

JEREMIAH II. 2.

Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.

THESE words immediately relate to the case of the Israelites. It is common with the prophets to address the whole nation as one person; and as a person passing through the several ages and as periods of life. But this passage is very applicable to the case of Christians, especially those who have in their youth made a serious and solemn dedication of themselves to God, particularly by joining in the Lord's supper. And here we may observe the view given us of such a dedication to God, and of the pleasing remembrance which God hath of it. Let us observe,

I. *The view here given us of a solemn dedication to God, and entering into covenant with him.*

It is called their "espousals." This expression hath a particular reference to the awful manner in which the law was given to Israel at mount Sinai. There God avouched himself for their God, and they avouched themselves for his people, and declared, "All that the Lord our God shall say unto us we will do, and be obedient." This was their espousals to God. In consequence of this contract, disobedience to his law, and especially idolatry, is represented as adultery, a breach of the marriage covenant. The dedication of a soul to God through Christ, according to

the nature and design of the Christian covenant, may very properly be thus described. For it is a contract founded in love. The soul is under the influence of a supreme love to God, a high esteem of his infinite excellencies, and a grateful sense of his innumerable benefits. This contract consists of mutual, unalterable engagements. The soul giveth itself to the Lord; entereth into covenant to be wholly devoted to his service and interest, and to admit no rival with him. The great God avoucheth such a soul for his, and promiseth to be its God, its Father, portion, and happiness. This covenant, like the marriage covenant, is never to be dissolved. It is, in the prophet's language, "a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten." St. Paul useth the same figure, when he tells the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 2), "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

II. *The words intimate the pleasing remembrance which God hath of an early dedication to him.* "I remember the kindness of thy youth."

When young persons set out well, make a sincere and solemn offer of their hearts and services to the Lord, he is pleased with it and graciously reckons it a most acceptable present. What renders it so acceptable is, that it ariseth from good and noble principles; a serious remembrance of their Creator, a just and grateful sense of their obligations to him and dependence upon him. It is indeed but an act of justice, giving him his due; yet he is pleased to esteem it an act of "kindness." He accepts it in youth as double kindness. Principally for these two reasons, because in youth the affections are most warm and lively. Young persons are capable of doing him more and better service than those in the advance of life generally are. By beginning early to serve him they are likely to become eminent Christians, and of greater usefulness in their generation than others. He is likewise peculiarly pleased with it because it is rare and uncommon. There are few in their youthful days who are willing to become espoused to the Lord. They are wedded to the cares or pleasures of life, and despise the maxims of heavenly wisdom. They are loath to come under the restraints of the gospel, though most reasonable and salutary. They choose to follow custom and fashion, and to walk in the way of their hearts and the sight of their eyes. To see young persons joining themselves to the Lord; publicly professing devotedness and subjection to him in this season of temptation and hazard, is a sight pleasing to God himself. And it is pleasant to all those who have a real concern for the support of religion. God will show his kind remembrance of this early dedication, by the most valuable tokens of his favour in this world, and if they persevere to the end, by conferring distinguishing glory upon them in that which is to come.

Now may we not hence infer that this is a powerful motive to young persons to yield themselves to God? to enter into sacramental engagements as a public evidence that they are and will be the Lord's? For what can be more desirable than to be approved and accepted of God? What harm can the sneers and reproaches of irreligious men do to us while we have this testimony, that we please God? May we not further observe, that God takes peculiar pleasure in remembering the early piety and continued fidelity of his aged servants? They have great encouragement to hope, yea may be fully assured, that having taught them from their youth, and enabled them to continue upon the whole faithful to him, he will never forsake them, but carry on his good work in them, and keep them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Let it be further observed, that young persons who have been inclined and enabled to devote themselves to God should be very thankful, and encourage themselves in the Lord their God. They should be thankful for the goodness which permits and invites to such a dedication, for the grace which hath enabled them to break through many temptations and discouragements to the contrary. Let young Christians remember that he is not unrighteous to forget the kindness and love which they are manifesting at this ordinance. You may comfortably plead this early dedication to him in your prayers, as an encouragement to hope for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, and that your strength shall be equal to your day and trial. If you continue faithful God will remember you for good. Have any of us forgotten our espousals to God and left our first love? Let his goodness humble us for our ingratitude, and shame us out of a disposition so base and dangerous. For God urgeth this thought in the words we have been considering, as a motive to Israel to return to him from whom they had revolted.

Let me now call upon thee, O my soul, to remember thy espousals to God, to recollect them with pleasure, and at the same time with deep humility, that thou hast not acted more consistently with them. Nevertheless, be encouraged by this gracious declaration seriously to renew the acknowledgment that thou art and wilt be his. I must not forget, and if I attend this ordinance with a thoughtful mind I cannot forget, that all my solemn transactions with God are to be carried on in the name of Jesus Christ, and with a humble, cheerful dependence upon him. All the blessings which I expect from the most High come to me through his hands. May I be engaged, by the mercies of God, and especially by Christ, that inestimable mercy, again to present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is my reasonable service!

AFTER PARTAKING.

Suffer the word of exhortation, my fellow-Christians, that you remember the goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord, and all the obligations and engagements you are under to be his. Endeavour to maintain a quick and habitual sense of them. This will be a powerful incentive to the practice of every duty, and a strong guard against the influence of every temptation. Let these sacred bonds to God and the Redeemer, which you are under, hold you close to your duty. We have need often to remind ourselves of them. We ought to suffer no sacramental opportunity to pass, without making this public acknowledgment, that we are and will be the Lord's. We ought to suffer no day to pass without recollecting and devoutly acknowledging before God, that we are espoused to him, as his devoted, faithful servants. It should give us peculiar pleasure to see young souls thus joining themselves to the Lord, for their own sakes, as their improvement in piety, and their happiness so much depend upon it. We should also rejoice in it, as giving us the most encouraging hope, that when our aged friends are arrived safe at heaven, Christ will still have "a seed to serve him, which shall be accounted to him for a generation;" whom he will own, and favour, and bless, as espoused to him. The kindness of their youth will afford them abundant satisfaction in the review, and tend to make them steady in religion, fruitful in every good work, and eminent for usefulness in the church. But let me exhort them to go forth in the strength of the Lord. Remember, young Christians, that humility, watchfulness, and prayer, are your best, your only security against leaving your first love. These will be your surest preservative against the force of temptation, and the means to make you eminently useful and honourable in the church and world. And let us all join to magnify the Lord, who taketh pleasure in the increase of his church, and in the prosperity of all his servants.

MEDITATION XXX.

Revelation ii. 10.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

What more proper words can I recommend to you, my fellow-Christians, as the subject of your meditation at the Lord's supper, than this animating address of our divine leader, in which he enjoins a most important duty, and urgeth it by a most forcible motive.

I. *Let us attend to the important duty here enjoined.* "Be thou faithful unto death." We are commanded to be faithful, and faithful unto death.

We are to be faithful. This comprehends the whole of our Christian work and warfare. But it more especially relates to our duty, as the called and chosen soldiers of Jesus Christ. For there is an evident allusion to military affairs and customs, through the whole of these epistles to the seven churches. We are to consider Christ as our leader and captain. Faithfulness includes attending to his directions; a desire to hear, and a readiness to obey, every word of command which he giveth. And this disposition of mind is to arise and to influence us, not merely from a regard to his authority and a fear of his wrath, but as proceeding from a grateful sense of his love and the obligations we are under to him who hath redeemed us from the slavery of sin, and purchased us to himself with his own blood. It includes following our leader wherever he goeth, imitating his example, and submitting to any labours and sufferings to which he calleth us. It includes a great and habitual concern for his interest, and a glowing zeal for the support of his kingdom and honour in the world. We are also to be "faithful unto death." This intimates to us that we are to persevere in his service to the end of our lives; that we are to continue patient in well doing, and hold out unto the end, how many and how difficult soever our trials and conflicts may be. But it seems more particularly to require our readiness to give up life itself, rather than violate our fidelity to him. So the connexion of the words intimates; "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Satan shall persecute you, and "ye shall have tribulation;" but "be faithful unto death." "If any man," saith he, "will come after me, and be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up the cross, and follow me," even to that painful, reproachful death, if I call him to it. We are to carry on a strenuous warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to say with Peter, "though I die with thee," or for thee, "yet will I not deny thee." An important and difficult duty indeed! But what can be too difficult to perform, what too painful to bear, what too dear and valuable to part with, when he giveth such ample encouragement? Let us consider,

II. *The forcible motive by which this duty is urged.* "And I will give thee a crown of life."

Though we may fall in the combat, and lose not only liberty and other earthly comforts, but even life itself, yet Christ will amply reward us. The reward shall be "a crown of life." There may here be a reference to those honorary crowns which were bestowed by ancient princes and states upon valiant soldiers. Or it may in general denote the highest dignity, as a crown is

the greatest earthly honour. This crown is infinitely more valuable than any which mortals wear. It includes also the highest felicity of which our natures are capable. And when it is called "a crown of life," it intimates the duration of the happiness; that it fadeth not away, but shall shine with everlasting and ever-increasing splendour. It is an additional circumstance of honour that this crown will be given by Christ himself; by him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who leads the soldiers on to the combat, and is a witness of their bravery and perseverance. It shall be given them before the assembled world of men and angels, and with expressions of his highest applause. Each circumstance will add to the honour and happiness of those to whom it is given.

And now, my fellow-soldiers, what should be our reflections and resolutions when so reasonable a duty is enjoined, and so forcible and endearing a motive urged upon us? Adore, my soul, the grace of thy divine leader, that he should purchase and prepare such a crown for thee, and reward the feeble and imperfect services of so short a warfare with such royal, such divine munificence! Thus to honour a poor worm who hath so often proved cowardly and unfaithful, deserted his leader, and taken part with his enemies, and who, had he been ever so faithful and resolute, is but an unprofitable servant, what amazing grace is this! Wonder, O my soul, wonder and adore; for thou never canst sufficiently estimate the grace. And is it thy good pleasure, O my Lord, to give me this crown; to set it with thy own royal hand on my unworthy head? It fills my heart with courage and with love. My soul glows with earnest desire to serve thee. I now renew my resolution to be faithful to thee, and boldly to face all opposition. For thee I am willing to labour. Yea, for thee I am willing to suffer. And neither bonds, nor afflictions, nor death in its more terrifying form, shall move me. I approach thy table to give a fresh proof of my loyalty to thee as the King of kings, of my fidelity to thee as the Captain of my salvation. I go to that ordinance again to take an oath of allegiance and subjection to my divine leader. I desire to do this both with sincerity and cheerfulness; to remember the obligations thou hast laid me under, and again to impress my soul with a sense of the duty which I owe thee, and of the blessings which I may expect from thee.

AFTER PARTAKING.

Our English word "sacrament" comes from the Latin, and originally signified an oath. It was used among the Romans for a military oath, or the oath which their soldiers took to be obedient to their commanders, and faithful to the service in which they were engaged. Such is the nature of this transaction; a solemn engagement into which we enter, to be obedient

and faithful to the Captain of our salvation. It is described in scripture as the character of a good man, "that he feareth an oath." He feareth to take it carelessly and rashly; and when he hath taken it, he feareth to break it. It is likewise described as his character, that though he inadvertently "sweareth to his own hurt, he changeth not;" but submits to the inconvenience and damage, rather than falsify his oath. We have again opened our mouths to the Lord, and we cannot, must not, go back. Indeed there is no substantial reason why we should do so, why we should desire to be released from our engagements. Let us then say with David, "I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." When we are tempted to be unfaithful, let us recollect that we cannot possibly gain any equivalent for the loss of the crown of life: that the possession of it will abundantly overpay all our labours, trials, and sufferings, though ever so many and long. But our warfare, difficult as it may be, will soon be accomplished. Many of our fellow-soldiers, who have often joined with us in this act of homage to our leader, are dismissed from the service; set free from all toil, and pain, and doubts. They shall no more meet or fear an enemy, or see evil any more. If we are faithful we shall soon be with them. Our reward will be great, and lasting, and increasing beyond all comprehension. Hear then the animating words of your leader (Rev. iii. 11), "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

MEDITATION XXXI.

1 John iii. 1.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

It is of importance for us frequently to consider the honour which the great God conferreth upon sincere Christians, in taking them into his family and placing them among his children. It is easy to see how our hearts ought to be impressed with so singular and astonishing an instance of divine goodness and mercy. This is a very proper subject of contemplation at the Lord's supper. And oh that we may there feel our souls duly affected with it! In order to this let me lead your thoughts to a reflection of St. John, which breathes a noble spirit, and which I hope your hearts will at once echo back with the most grateful devotion. Having mentioned the happiness of true Christians, who work righteousness, in being born of God, he

breaks out into a transport of admiration and joy, saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Let us now fix our thoughts on this interesting subject. And in order more thoroughly to convince us how great and amazing the love of God is, let us consider the privilege itself, our character, and the method by which this favour is bestowed upon us.

I. *The privilege itself is exceeding great and glorious; even to be the children of God.*

What is there grand, noble, or desirable, which is not comprehended in it? All men may indeed be called the children of God. For, we have all one father, as one God created us. But the title is peculiar appropriated to good men. When they are renewed they become the sons of God. Their sins are forgiven, and they are freed from a dreadful condemnation. They become the objects of his favour, who is the greatest and best of beings. They are taken under his guidance, who is the only wise God; and under his guardianship and protection, who is the most powerful and compassionate of beings. They have comfortable access to him at all times. They can on every occasion approach him with humble hope and cheerful confidence, as their Father. His fidelity is engaged to supply their wants, to support their spirits, to strengthen them with inward strength, to sustain and comfort them in all their afflictions and in death itself, and to give them an everlasting inheritance. Behold, how high this love riseth, how widely it extends, and how lasting its effects are. Let us consider further,

II. *Our character.*

Who are we, that we should be called the sons of God? Considering us only as his creatures, it displays his love. For there are probably many ranks and orders of beings, vastly superior to us in their capacities, and powers, and moral qualities. And we know of no degree of rational beings below us in the creation. Yet to us this love is shown, and the Father of the whole family of heaven and earth dignifies us with the title of his children. But this love will appear unutterable and inconceivable, when we consider ourselves as sinners; creatures who have offended our Maker, violated his holy laws, and revolted from our duty and allegiance. He might justly and easily have consumed us by one awful frown, and made us everlasting monuments of his righteous displeasure. But upon our repentance and faith we are adopted into his family. God hath displayed his condescension and love in the most illustrious and astonishing manner, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. This leads us to reflect further,

III. *The method by which this favour is bestowed upon us greatly enhanceth its value.*

God gave his Son, his dear, his beloved, his only begotten Son. He gave him for us; gave him to abasement, sufferings, and death, that we might be, in an honourable manner, restored to his favour. We, who once were afar off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. A way into God's family and into the holiest of all, his house above, is opened for us sinners and rebels by the death of his Son. To prepare us for this dignity and felicity God hath sent down his Spirit, to renew the lost image of our Father upon us, and promote and strengthen a filial disposition in our hearts. That we might become his children, the gospel was given. For this, ministers are commissioned and qualified. For this, Christian ordinances are appointed. All display his amazing love, and demonstrate how much his gracious heart was set upon restoring us to his family, putting us among his children, and training us up for the dignity and felicity of his heavenly palace.

Let us recollect these particulars at this ordinance, as they are peculiarly suited to the solemnity itself, and adapted to excite such affections in our hearts as may make our attendance comfortable and edifying. Let us thus devoutly reflect,

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, the unworthiest of creatures, and one of the greatest of sinners, that I should be called his child! I have been invited and encouraged, and am now come to attend his table, to receive a token of his paternal love, an assurance of his tender mercy, and to commemorate the seal of that covenant by which the heavenly inheritance is granted and secured to me. I behold, with delight and admiration, this amazing love. I desire and hope that the present recollection of it may increase my humility, which is the foundation of the Christian temper, and the support of every Christian virtue. It is the proper frame of heart in which to pay my acknowledgment to God for past mercies, and to entreat continued favours. The view I am taking of his great love is, I hope, exciting my thankfulness. I feel some grateful emotions towards my gracious and indulgent Father. I would inquire, what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? How shall I give due honour to him, and prove myself a dutiful and obedient child? How shall I own, and in any measure repay, the immense obligations I am under to Jesus, who hath given me power to become a child of God? I would likewise inquire how I shall, in my sphere, promote the credit and prosperity of that truly honourable and noble family to which I have the favour to be allied? I would now, with filial reverence and confidence, address him as my Father in heaven, my Father in Christ. And may he, at this time, by the gracious influences of his Spirit upon my heart, as a Spirit of adoption and consolation, own the endearing relation!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When the psalmist had been contemplating the goodness of God, in giving him prosperity and peace, he saith (Psalm xvi. 6), "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage." A reflection which we have peculiar reason to make when we have been partaking of this ordinance, under a sense of the divine love, and amidst the views of everlasting felicity. Let us, then, with David, "bless the Lord who hath given us counsel" and assistance. Let us labour to be deeply and habitually sensible of the favours which he hath conferred upon us, and every day devoutly acknowledge the goodness and love of our indulgent Father. What though the world knoweth us not; what though it despise, hate, and persecute us; let us consider the world knew not Jesus. He was despised and rejected of men, and persecuted and slain; though he gave the clearest evidences that he was the Son of God, and commissioned by him to be a teacher and a Saviour. Marvel not, then, my brethren, if you meet with a like treatment. But let nothing move you from your duty to your Father, your stedfastness, and your hope. Trust his care to direct, support, and provide for you, as his children. Never forget your relation to Jesus, as your dear and honoured elder brother, through whose kind interposition you enjoy the blessings of God's family. Never forget your relation to one another, and all that bear the divine image, as children of the same Father, brethren of the same family, and heirs together of the same goodly heritage. Let me add, in the words of the apostle, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Let us continually reflect upon his natural and most forcible inference, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

MEDITATION XXXII.

LUKE XXII. 15.

And Jesus said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.

WHEN our Lord was sitting down with his twelve apostles to the paschal supper, which was a commemoration of God's delivering their fathers out of the land of Egypt, "he said unto them, With desire I have desired," a Hebrew phrase, which signifies, I have earnestly desired, to eat this passover with you before I suffer. Our Lord doubtless observed all the institutions of the law of Moses. Of his observation of some of them

we have a particular account. And we have sufficient reason to believe that he paid the same regard to the rest.

He desired to perform this service, as all others, from a principle of obedience to God his Father, who commanded all the Jews to keep the passover. He was desirous to pay an exact and punctual regard to all divine institutions; or, as he expresseth it, to fulfil all righteousness. Thereby he intended to set before his disciples an example of obedience, and a care to walk in all God's commands and ordinances blameless. He was desirous to keep the passover, as it was a commemoration of that great deliverance which God wrought for Israel, in bringing them out of the land of bondage in safety and peace; when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, and spared all those of the Israelites. Christ was solicitous to acknowledge that deliverance with gratitude, in the way that God had appointed; to do his part to keep up the remembrance of it, to have it improved as a motive to observe all the other commandments of the Lord.

But our Saviour lays a particular stress on the service he was then performing. *This* passover. No passover was ever so welcome and delightful to him. Not one in the course of his life and ministry of which he was so desirous to partake. And the reason was, because he was to suffer and die the next day. This passover was to open that wonderful scene which he had been long preparing and waiting for. His desire to eat it was very strong and fervent, because God was now about to be honoured in the most illustrious manner, and the salvation and happiness of the world to be promoted. He was so far from being daunted with a view of his sufferings, that he longed for their approach, that he might glorify his heavenly Father by the sacrifice of himself; that he might, as our passover, be sacrificed for us, to obtain pardon, peace, and eternal life for us. It would confirm his own resolution to suffer, that thereby he was to deliver his people from a worse than Egyptian bondage, the slavery of sin and Satan, and the dominion of death. He was also to show his love to his disciples in a more distinguishing and affectionate manner than ever: "I desire to eat it with you." He showed that love by washing their feet, by explaining to them the nature of his kingdom, and the design of his sufferings; by instituting his own supper, which was to supersede the passover, and is so much for the edification and comfort of the church. He was now to open his heart more fully and affectionately to them, as we find he did at this solemnity; and the prospect of his sufferings would put peculiar life and spirit into his addresses to them and prayers for them. It would also engage them to pay a greater regard to what passed on this affecting occasion, and at this last ordinance in which they were to join with him upon earth.

Now here we see, and let us admire and adore, the amazing love of our Lord Jesus Christ in desiring to eat this passover, as warmly as if no sufferings and terrors were to attend or follow it. So justly doth St. John observe in this connexion, that "having loved his own, that were in the world, he loved them to the end," and was willing to give the strongest proof of his love in the last scenes of his life. What resolution and ardour of spirit did this produce! Blessed Jesus, thy love was indeed great. We hope that we feel something of its constraining influence; and there is nothing we desire more than that our love to thee may bear a greater proportion to the warmth and constancy of thy love to us.

Further, we have here an example to direct and animate us; to show us how our hearts should work towards divine ordinances, and with what earnestness we should desire to partake of them, particularly of this. From obedience to the divine command, and a regard to the honour of Christ, to keep up the memory of his dying love, and increase our own edification and comfort. The fervour of our Master's heart, in the view of suffering and death for our sakes, shames our coldness and indifference.

There is one important view in which this passage directs us to consider the ordinance before us; namely, as an excellent preparative for afflictions, sufferings, and death. We all have these scenes before us. The days of darkness will come. The days of affliction will take hold on us. Our Christian friends are, one after another, removing from us, and their places at the Lord's table know them no more. Some by reason of age and infirmities, have this scene in a near view. The expectation of it should endear the Lord's supper to us, and engage us with warm desires to come to it. Thus would I come, will the devout Christian say, and with the justest reason; for here I see the brightest display of divine love, which ought to influence me to the most painful obedience and the most dutiful submission. I see the resolution and patience of my divine master, and ought not to complain of my much lighter sufferings, but to follow his steps. I see here the sting and curse of afflictions and death taken away, and my hope of eternal life confirmed, and the precious promises of it sealed, by the death of Christ. Amidst the tribulation of the world I see, and have in some degree experienced, what peace and hope I have in Christ Jesus. The consolations of the everlasting covenant are opened upon me, and my title to them ensured, as far as I sincerely believe. I may and would learn here that all necessary assistances in the way to glory are purchased for me and will be bestowed upon me by my great Lord. It is pleasant to eat this passover with my brethren, who are redeemed by the same blood; and, though now my companions in the tribulation of Jesus Christ, are heirs

with me of the same promises and inheritance. Let me then approach to this ordinance with earnest desire; praying and hoping that it may help to prepare me for every scene of life and death, and for that eternal glory which God who cannot lie hath promised."

AFTER PARTAKING.

Let us now seriously consider what is the end of this institution; not merely to remember Christ, to feel some emotions of gratitude and love to him and consecrate ourselves anew to his service, while actually engaged in it; but to keep up an habitual remembrance of him in our hearts, and engage us faithfully to serve him all our days. It is designed to excite us to deny ourselves, to submit to any hardships and sufferings, which providence may appoint for us; and be willing to die whenever God calls us. May this ordinance be a cordial to us, lighten our burdens, support our spirits, dissipate our fears of death, and lead us to long for the last solemnity of this kind, when we shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine, but be removed to the nobler entertainments of God's heavenly temple! That these ends may be answered, let me leave with you, and desire you often to reflect upon, those sublime and delightful words of the apostle Paul (Rom. viii. 38, 39), "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Neither the fears and pangs of death, nor the pleasures, cares, and sorrows of life; no superior beings and powers either good or bad; no present affliction, pain, and fear; no future scene of suffering, however severe; no height of prosperity and satisfaction in any worldly object or connexion; no depth of adversity, though we are sunk beyond hope of recovery, and on the brink of despair; no other creature, however artful, powerful, and indefatigable; shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. What reviving delightful words to every sincere Christian! What strong consolation doth the gospel inspire its faithful professors with! What support is here in the prospect and approach of the greatest and most complicated sufferings! What relief and comfort in the near views and even attacks of death itself! A pious divine in dying circumstances, finding his eye-sight fail, desired his surrounding friends to bring him a bible and to put his finger on those words of the apostle I have been mentioning. There he held it, and with full assurance and lively expressions of hope and joy, immediately expired. How honourable and delightful a close of a holy and useful life! We are soon to return to the cares and hurries and sorrows of the world again. God only knows what further trials and sufferings

may be before us. But let our faith rest upon such an animating promise as this. And may it at once promote our diligence and watchfulness, our patience and courage, and cause us, in every scene of life and death, to abound in hope, by the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

JOHN XI. 51, 52.

The high priest prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

WE meet together, my fellow-Christians, at the Lord's table to commemorate the love of God in giving his Son to save lost sinners; to remember the death of Christ, by which we obtain pardon, peace, and eternal life. That our meditations on these topics may be more regular and more easily recollected, let them take their rise from the account which St. John gives us of a kind of prophecy of Caiaphas, the high priest; that it was better one man, however innocent and useful, "should die for the people, than the whole nation perish." This was the advice of one who thought himself a consummate politician. But the evangelist intimates that, being high priest that year, he, by an impulse from heaven, delivered his opinion in words which were capable of a much higher and more important sense than he intended; namely, that Jesus should die for that nation, and also to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Here we are naturally led to consider the ends of Christ's appearing and death. One was,

I. *To die for the sins of the world:* not only for their benefit but in their stead; for that seems to be the plain meaning of the words, and it is confirmed by many other passages in the New Testament. He came and died to deliver those who were condemned by the holy law of God, and the prisoners of justice. He died to free them from the punishment which they had deserved, to remove the guilt which they had contracted, to restore them to the privileges which they had lost, and bring them to God; to a state of friendship and communion with him. He died for the Jewish nation. His commission first took in the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These he came to seek and to save. But not these only, for he had other sheep, not of that fold, who had gone astray, and were wandering in the paths of ignorance, error, and sin. For these he was also to die. He was appointed to be "a light to the gentiles," and God's salva-

tion to "the ends of the earth." The words intimate that Christ's great errand in coming into the world was "to die," and to die as a sacrifice. On this the greatest stress is every where laid in the New Testament. Again,

II. *He was to collect and unite the children of God, wherever they were scattered.*

All men indeed are the children of God. For we have all one father, and one God created us. But this expression refers to all humble penitent souls; to all who should, by the gospel, be brought to receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. These he was to gather together; gentiles and Jews, in all distant places and ages. For he is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He was to unite them in a glorious and happy society, which should be called by his name, and over which he was to preside, as their lord and head; a society which should solemnly and frequently profess allegiance and subjection to him, and be governed by him. They are called God's children, as begotten again, or renewed by his word and Spirit, and adopted into his family. They are united in one. They make one church, though divided into many distinct societies. Though they are of different persuasions, and use different modes and forms, yet they are one grand and honourable society, joined to one Lord, and professing one faith in all the essentials of it. They have received one baptism; they hold communion in the same ordinances; they are assisted and strengthened by one Spirit; and intended for one everlasting home. Now what influence ought these interesting truths to have upon us?

Undoubtedly they should lead us to cherish a grateful sense of that love of God which disposed him to form and execute this design. The Father of mercies commissioned his only begotten Son to come down to this world, to instruct and guide us; and especially to die as a sacrifice for our sins, and introduce us into that holy and honourable society over which he presides. We here commemorate that event; the grace which gave rise to it, and the wisdom and love by which the design was conducted and completed. Our thoughts are naturally led to that glory and happiness to which it was intended to advance us. And it is highly reasonable and proper that we should celebrate this love with thankfulness and joy.

We ought likewise to recollect how wise and gracious a scheme it was thus to incorporate all holy men into one society. The apostle observeth that God manifested his love in all wisdom and prudence; that "in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and upon earth." This plan conduceth to the honour of Christ, whom God hath highly exalted to

preside over the recovered and holy part of his creation; which should now stand in a peculiar relation to him, and reverence, love, and obey him. His death is the grand attractive that draws men to him. His love constrains them to become members of his body, and his devoted and faithful servants. This scheme contributes likewise to the mutual comfort and edification of his servants. They consider themselves as belonging to a holy fraternity or brotherhood; united to Christ and each other by a sacred and most honourable tie. They consider themselves, consequently, as obliged to promote the honour of their head and Lord, and the welfare of all their fellow-members, and to cherish and exercise all the social virtues with the utmost care.

Hast thou not great reason, then, O my soul, to be thankful that thou art gathered into this society; that thou art become a child of God, and, with thy Christian brethren, members one of another, by faith in Christ Jesus? My remote ancestors were like theirs, gentiles, heathens; without God in the world; strangers to the covenants of promise, and to the hope of eternal glory. But I am set among God's children; brought nigh by the blood of Christ, and am become an heir of the heavenly inheritance. Ought I not to be thankful, likewise, that God hath inclined me to join in communion with the church in this solemn act, which is peculiar to the religion of Jesus, and most expressive of my relation to him and to my Christian brethren? I would celebrate that mercy which hath recovered me from my wanderings, and brought me near to God. With a devout and fervent heart I would express my love to my God and my Saviour, and my affection to all my Christian brethren; by this act of communion with Christ, and with those who are members of the same Christian church; yea, with all that in every place love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have now, as a sacred society, as the children of God, and a holy brotherhood, been holding communion with our Lord and one another. Let me exhort you to behave worthy the relation in which you stand; becoming members of the most honourable and excellent society in this lower world; even the society of faithful Christians in every place and nation. Let us be careful to "hold the head;" to reverence, love, and obey him, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Let brotherly love continue. Though some of our fellow-members have a different faith from us in some points, worship in different places and forms, and partake even of this ordinance in a manner different from us, in some things not essential to it; let us still embrace them with Christian candour, and love and serve them as brethren. Let it be our care to walk in every respect worthy the vocation wherewith we are called. We have different ranks in Christ's church, different relations to one another

different capacities of service. Let us all unite in our endeavours to promote the honour of our common Lord, and the credit and happiness of that society to which we are related. Let us especially consider one another in this light, as brethren, that we may provoke one another to love and good works. Finally, let us direct our views to the day when all Christ's faithful servants shall be gathered together in one place, even in his heavenly palace. They are now, in this sense, still "scattered abroad," and mingled with the wicked. Many of them are afflicted and distressed. All of them are weak and imperfect. At length they shall all meet. They shall come from the east and west, north and south, from all nations and languages. Proclamation shall be made, "Gather my saints together, those who have made a covenant with me." God will have all his children about him, and smile upon them with great and everlasting complacency. It is a pleasure to worship with a multitude of those, who are our fellow-Christians by a general profession, and to pay our joint homage to our common Father. There is peculiar pleasure in this act of worship and communion, as we have reason to hope and believe that by far the greater part, if not all, who join with us, are indeed the beloved children of God, and joint-heirs of a blessed immortality. How delightful then must it be to be gathered to the general assembly and church of the first-born above; to that great multitude which no man can number, all holy, all happy! Let me therefore, in the apostle's words, "beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, that ye stand fast in the Lord; adorn his doctrine in all things; diligently prepare, patiently wait for, and cheerfully expect, that day, when he shall present the whole society of his redeemed ones to his Father, "as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

MEDITATION XXXIV.

Deuteronomy v. 28, 29.

And the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there was such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.

The great end of gospel institutions is to promote and increase holiness in us. It is necessary that we keep this thought in our minds; as it will direct us with what views we should attend upon them, and what preparation is necessary for an ac-

ceptable approach to God in them. It will likewise assist us to judge what improvement we make of our religious services, and whether they answer the intended end. I hope these thoughts possess your minds, brethren, when you are approaching to the Lord's supper. If so, your ministers may congratulate you on your hearts being duly prepared, and, in their Master's name, bid you welcome to it, as guests with whom he will be well pleased. You come, I hope, with a sincere desire to have your good dispositions strengthened, and your hearts more and more united to God and his service. That this desirable end may be answered, let me set before you the regard which God showed to his people Israel, when they entered into covenant with him; and what consequent behaviour he required and expected at their hands. After he had delivered the ten commandments from mount Sinai, the Israelites were so much terrified that they desired Moses might be commissioned to speak to them in God's name, and they promised that they would hear and do it. Let us carefully observe what God saith to them, when they were in this good mind, and learn our own duty from it. "And the Lord said unto me," &c. From hence we may observe,

I. *God is witness to every word which we utter; especially to our solemn engagements to be his servants.* "I have heard the voice of the words of this people."

It is our duty always to remember that "there is not a word in our tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether." He not only hears it but remembers it; and in the final judgment words will be brought into the account. Thus our Lord observed, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." But God taketh particular notice of our vows and solemn engagements; what we say, when we enter into covenant with him. Yea, he reads our secret sentiments, desires, and resolutions, though they be not uttered by words. "I know," saith he, "the things that come into your mind, every one of them." This should be a caution to us, that we be not rash to utter any thing before God. It should make us careful to remember what we said, or more secretly professed and resolved, when we gave up ourselves to the Lord. For he perfectly remembers it, and will examine how far our conduct hath been agreeable to it and consistent with it. Let us observe further,

II. *Those that say they will hear and do what God commandeth, say well; and he is pleased with such declarations and resolutions.* "They have well said, all that they have spoken."

The Israelites expressed their desire to receive commands and directions from God. They desired that Moses might be their mediator; from a reverential awe of God, and a conviction of

their own weakness. And they expressed a full determination to do whatever God commanded. These were very good words. This was a noble determination, and God himself commends it. is pleased with the resolution of his servants to keep his commands, because it is for his own glory, as the righteous governor of the world. It tends to promote the credit and interest of that religion which he hath established. It is likewise for the honour and happiness of those who make it; and God always taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. His approbation of the Israelites' resolution in the circumstance before us is his testimony to the importance and excellency of a righteous character. He is a true and perfect judge of all real worth, and never commends any thing but what is truly commendable. It is an instance also of his condescension and grace, that he would express his complacency in their resolutions, and appear pleased with their good beginnings; while yet, humanly speaking, it was uncertain whether they would fulfil their engagements. Let us remark further,

III. *The great God wishes that they who make good resolutions would keep them.* "Oh that there were such a heart in them!" an heart to fear God and keep his commandments.

A holy filial fear of God is the principle, the only principle, from which persevering obedience to his commands will flow. Good promises and resolutions are well as far as they go; but they are not enough. God expects and demands that these be executed and fulfilled. The expression implies how desirous he is of the salvation of men. He wishes they would be perseveringly good. He longs to see them so. We may naturally conclude from hence, that nothing shall be wanting on his part to make them so; that no necessary assistance shall be withheld. Let us once more observe,

IV. *It would be hoppy for the professors of religion, if they would abide by their good resolutions and act consistently.*

It would be "well with them," if there were always such an heart in them as there is at those solemn seasons, when they give up themselves to God, and promise and engage to keep his commandments; if there were a perfect consistency between their sacramental engagements and their whole behaviour. The expression plainly intimates that it is never well, truly well, with mankind, till they keep God's commandments; till they keep all his commandments; yea, till they keep them always. This is what God expects. Good resolutions without a consistent, sincere, persevering obedience, will not be accepted. Men may promise fair, and solemnly engage; yea they may keep some of God's commandments, or all of them for a while; yet it may be ill with them at last. But if our obedience be agreeable to our covenant

engagements, it will be well with us. Our happiness will be ensured. It will, as these words intimate, entail a blessing on our children. Yea, it will be well with us for ever. For this is the command of God to his ministers, "Say ye unto the righteous, It shall be well with him," finally, eternally well, whatever he loseth or suffereth here.

And now to apply these thoughts to ourselves. We here acknowledge and renew our covenant engagements to the Lord. The language of this action is, "All that the Lord shall say unto us, we will hear and do." God is pleased to see his servants assembled to make such a profession, and he approves of their pious resolutions. Shall not our hearts say, Adored be my gracious God for such condescension? But let me take care that I do not disappoint his reasonable expectations concerning me; and in the future course of my life, like the treacherous Israelites, unsay what I here say with so much seriousness and solemnity. To prevent this, I would deliberate on what I am about; attend to those motives, which this transaction suggesteth to make me stedfast; namely the amazing love and grace of God, and of the Redeemer, to me and my sinful race. And I would daily and fervently address the throne of grace, that God would "give me an heart to fear him, and keep his commandments always, that it may be well with me for ever.

AFTER PARTAKING.

"I have sworn," saith David, "and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments" (Ps. cxix. 106). Thus the pious psalmist reflected upon what he had done. He had seriously considered the nature of religion. He was convinced of the reasonableness of it. He entirely approved the practice of it in all its branches. He resolved to practise it. And in order to engage himself more firmly to it, and to prevent his being led away by any temptations, he had confirmed his resolutions by a solemn oath in the presence of God, the searcher of hearts. All this we in effect have been doing. We have been again taking an oath of allegiance to God, our supreme sovereign, and binding our souls to be faithful to our duty, punctual and resolute in obeying all his commands, and submissive to all his appointments, and his dispensations towards us. As to what is yet before us, let me exhort you to determine, with David, to perform what you have sworn, and never act a false, treacherous, and deceitful part. Resolve to show yourselves honest men; a title which comprehends much more than the generality mean by the use of it. Resolve to be faithful to God as well as to man, and to your own consciences and sacred engagements. In this view often think of your vows: how reasonable, how important, how useful they are. Remember that God hath heard all that you have uttered, or purposed in your minds; that he hath re-

corded it in the book of his remembrance, and observes how you keep your resolutions. Be daily humbled before God, that you have not been more stedfast in your covenant, more exact in your obedience, and more entirely devoted to his service. Renew a believing application to the throne of grace, through the blood of sprinkling and the intercession of our high priest. And finally, let us daily pray for, and continually depend upon, the influences of the Spirit, to perfect every good work in us, and enable us to "be faithful unto death, that we may obtain the crown of life."

MEDITATION XXXV.

JOHN vi. 54, 55.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

I CONGRATULATE you, my Christian brethren, on the prospect of another approach to the Lord's table. I hope you will feel your hearts glowing with gratitude and love to your Saviour, and a desire to obtain assistance and strength to "walk worthy of the Lord, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." That I may do my part to make your attendance edifying, I would direct your thoughts to these instructive and comfortable words of our divine master, where he tells us what is necessary in order to our being raised up at the last day, and advanced to the dignity and felicity of his heavenly kingdom. Here we may observe a duty enjoined, and the happiness connected with it.

I. *Let us attend to the duty enjoined:* and that is, eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ.

I need not take up many of these precious moments in showing you how absurd it would be to understand these words literally; and how groundless the doctrine of transubstantiation is, which the papists draw from them; namely, that, upon consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of Christ. This is not only absurd in itself, and contrary both to our senses and understandings, but Christ himself cautions us against such an idea when he saith (v. 63), "The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life." That is, they have a spiritual, figurative meaning; and your Christian life, the life of your souls, depends upon a due regard to them. This figurative language undoubtedly means believing in him, habitually regarding him as the great support of the spiritual life; living upon him by faith, as our bodies do upon what we eat and drink. It signifies depending upon his atone-

ment, trusting in the virtue and merit of his sacrifice, and, as the apostle expresseth it, living by the faith of the Son of God. It implies a persuasion that the life of our souls depends on his sacrifice and the communications of his grace; and an earnest desire of those blessings which he hath purchased for us by giving his flesh to be broken, and his blood to be shed for our sakes. You will observe that this is spoken of as a continued act. It is to be the habitual temper of our minds to trust in Christ Jesus for a supply of all our spiritual wants, as we are daily obliged to have recourse to food and drink for the support of the animal life. "His flesh," he tells us, "is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed;" that is, the most excellent food, that which best deserves the name of meat and drink. The life and vigour of our souls as necessarily depends on the lively exercises of faith in him, as that of the body doth upon receiving proper food. A principle of faith in Christ, the habitual exercise of this grace, nourisheth the soul, giveth vigour to its faculties, firmness to its resolutions, and enableth it to grow in holiness. Without this, he tells us (v. 53), we have no life in us, no principle of spiritual life, no right to eternal life. But,

II. *Great is the happiness resulting from this faith; which is the other thing suggested in the words before us.*

And let us carefully observe how noble a privilege this is. For instance, it brings the soul into a state of union with Christ. So he saith (v. 56), "he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." There is an intimate constant union between Christ and true believers; a union of affection and of interest. The believer fixeth his dependence upon Christ, and is zealous in his service and for his honour. Christ communicates to him all the blessings which he hath to bestow; all which his interest in the Father can procure. Further, Christ supports the divine life in the soul. So he saith (v. 57), "he that eateth me shall live by me." His soul shall be healthy, vigorous, and active. Every virtue shall be thriving and strengthening in it. But this is not all. Our Lord saith, the believer "hath eternal life." He hath it already; the beginning and the earnest of it, and he shall at length be assuredly brought to the full possession of it. It is a happiness which shall last, not for a few days, or months, or years, or ages, but through eternity. Our Lord adds, "And I will raise him up at the last day." These bodies of ours, which are now about to receive that bread and wine which represents the body and blood of Christ, will soon die and be laid in the dust. They will consume and perish there, undistinguished from the bodies of those who never knew a Redeemer, and of those who despised and rejected him. Yet even then the soul shall be alive, active, glorious, and happy. It shall look down, as it

were, without terror or sorrow on the mouldering clay, assuredly expecting a triumphant resurrection. We may therefore apply to ourselves all the animating, delightful things which the scriptures speak concerning the resurrection of the saints, and live and die in full assurance of faith that they will be accomplished in us and for us. It increaseth the pleasure of the prospect that Christ, by his mighty power, shall effect the wonderful change, lead us to the appointed mansions, and communicate to us the joys of his heavenly kingdom.

Though the words we have been illustrating do not indeed relate to the Lord's supper, but to the doctrine of Christ in general and the blessings of the Christian covenant, yet that ordinance is adapted, and was in part designed, to impress these thoughts upon our minds. It was intended to lead us to such believing regards to our Lord Jesus Christ; and, as a memorial of the seal of the new covenant, to confirm our expectation of a glorious resurrection and a blessed immortality. I would approach to it (let every Christian say) with a lively faith in the power, faithfulness, and mercy of the Redeemer; with a longing appetite to receive out of his fulness grace upon grace. I desire to manifest more constant, humble, grateful regards to him as the fountain and support of the spiritual life. I would renew my sincere resolutions to use all the members of my body and employ all the faculties of my soul in his service. I would do this in a manner becoming one who is bought with an invaluable price, and hath a cheerful hope that both parts of my nature will at length be glorified by Christ and with him in his heavenly kingdom.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When our Lord had been describing himself as the true manna, the bread of God which came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world, some of his well-disposed hearers said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread" (ver. 35). Such, I hope, is the language of our souls after we have been joining in this service; feeding, as it were, by faith on Christ, and receiving spiritual nourishment from his ordinances and his Spirit. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, let us desire the sincere milk of the word, and daily have recourse to this spiritual food, that we may grow thereby. Some of the disciples of Christ, when they heard him describe himself as the bread of life, and insist on the necessity of eating this bread, murmured at him, and said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (v. 60.) Yea, "many of them went back and walked no more with him." (v. 66). I cannot suppose any of you to be so ignorant of the nature and design of the gospel, or the meaning and vast importance of our Lord's remark; or so little solicitous about the advancement of the spiritual life in your souls, as either to forsake him, or cavil at his instructive and encouraging words, or

even to forget them. Were the question to be put to you which Jesus put to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" I am persuaded you would answer in the language of St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." No other teacher can point out to us the true, the sure way to eternal life. No other can lead and keep us in that way. Nothing but faith in him, and that holy conversation which a true faith will produce, can render us meet for eternal life. Let this be our resolution, never to forsake him. And let us continually pray that God would increase our faith. For our Lord declareth, and I leave his words with you as the most important and interesting which you can remember and act upon, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (v. 47). "I am the living bread, if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever" (v. 51).

MEDITATION XXXVI.

1 Peter ii. 24.

By whose stripes ye were healed.

It is observable that sin is frequently represented to us in scripture as an evil disease; as the sickness of the soul, which perverts its faculties, destroys its comfort, and, unless it be healed and removed, will end in everlasting death. But divine wisdom and love have appointed a method of recovery; even the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. A serious believing regard to what he endured for our sakes and to take away sin, is adapted to heal the distempers of our souls. This is the idea that St. Peter giveth us in the words now before us. It is natural to infer from thence that the Lord's supper must be a very useful ordinance, and contribute greatly to the health and edification of our souls; to promote and maintain their vigour and activity. For here we see, in a very affecting manner, what injury sin hath done to the human nature; to what a low, sickly state it is reduced from that in which it originally was. It suggests to us that all mankind are more or less affected with this moral disorder, and are in danger of destruction. Here we see the method of cure pointed out; even the stripes and other sufferings of Christ. By viewing and partaking of these elements, our thoughts are directed to, and fixed upon, the body of Christ which was broken, and upon his blood which was shed, for our sins. These signs assist our faith and meditation, and serve to give us lively ideas of our disease and our remedy. We view those stripes which the Redeemer suffered when upon earth, and are led to consider them as the effect of our sins. We view the representation of that blood which sealed the new covenant; which purges and sanctifies every soul that manifests a

believing regard to it, and dependeth upon it. We see Christ dying that we might have life, and have it more abundantly; that, being restored to spiritual life and health, we might enjoy ourselves, serve God in the regular exercise of all our rational faculties, and might live for ever. At this ordinance we remember and show forth the death of Christ, which brings a nobler, better, and more complete cure to our disordered souls, than all the prescriptions of the heathen philosophers or Jewish doctors. That contemplation of a Redeemer's sufferings to which we are here naturally led, must give every devout mind much encouragement and pleasure. To remember benefits received and devoutly to acknowledge them; to trace the several steps by which our redemption was accomplished with serious attention and gratitude of soul, must afford great delight to every generous, pious Christian. Besides this, the contemplation of Christ's sufferings hath an evident tendency to promote the health of our souls, to increase their holiness, to mortify and weaken their remaining corruptions and inclinations to that which is evil, and engage us to live to him who died for us, and rose again. To have joined ourselves to a Christian church, to have commemorated the death of Christ by this solemn act, and taken an oath, as it were, over the memorials of his death, to walk agreeably to the rules of his gospel, this is a great security against apostasy; a constant incitement to press on towards perfection. Even the most improved and confirmed Christians have yet their imperfections. There are some remains of sin to be rooted out; some symptoms of this spiritual disease to be removed. God's house is a kind of public infirmary, where the medicines of the great physician of souls are dispensed. And this ordinance in particular is both a cordial and a cure. It is adapted to subdue our sins, to strengthen and improve our graces, to animate our hearts, and enable us more vigorously and cheerfully to perform all the duties of life to which we may be called. Let us then attend it with these views; earnestly desiring and cheerfully expecting further communications of the healing, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. For your encouragement consider how many cures Christ hath already wrought; to how many souls dead in sin he hath given spiritual life; to how many diseased souls he hath imparted spiritual health and vigour; to how many doubting, trembling souls he hath communicated joy and peace in believing.

Yes, blessed be God, will many Christians say, here I have found the divine life nourished and strengthened. Here I have been quickened and animated in my Christian course. Here I have been comforted and encouraged, amidst the painful doubts and fears with which my mind hath been often exercised and distressed. When I have been going backward in religion, and felt the symptoms of spiritual decay, I have found my heart

roused to shake off my sloth, to search and try my ways, and press forward with greater zeal and resolution towards the prize of the high calling. I have been humbled for my folly and negligence; encouraged to renew the exercises of repentance and faith, and enabled to follow hard after God. I have been led and excited to walk more worthy the holy calling wherewith I am called; and to behave more suitably to the invaluable favours I have received, and the eternal blessings which I am encouraged to expect. I yet, alas, find much weakness in my graces, much unsteadiness in my resolutions. I have not attained that health and vigour of soul which might have been expected from my religious advantages, and which would have been so comfortable to myself, and so honourable to my profession. But the divine physician can heal these remaining disorders. And this is one of the methods which he prescribes for that purpose. I would diligently and thankfully use the means, and wait upon him for his blessing to attend them. I am now approaching this table to have my heart again and more deeply impressed with a sense of the evil of sin, and the misery it produceth; with the love of Christ in giving himself a ransom, that I might behave as the devoted faithful servant of God. May I, by this service, have my dread of sin increased! May I grow more holy and more active in the Christian life! More resolute in avoiding and resisting temptation, and better prepared for the world of perfect and everlasting health, vigour, and joy! Amen.

AFTER PARTAKING.

I hope and believe, my brethren, that I may congratulate you as being in the main, and in the best sense of the word, well: that "your souls prosper and are in health" (3 John 2). I hope, that during this service, you have found your hearts filled with such hatred of sin, and such love to Christ and to holiness; such earnest desires of greater degrees of purity and benevolence; such resolutions to be more stedfast, exemplary, and useful, as are evident symptoms that your souls are, upon the whole, in a good state. This claims your highest praise to the God of your salvation. Thankfully adore the grace which hath wrought the cure. What can be more ungrateful and base, than to forget your obligations to him whom Moses calls, "the Lord that healeth thee?" "Were there not ten lepers cleansed," saith Christ, "but where are the nine? There was but one found to give glory to God," for so signal a cure. If the leprosy of sin is rooted out of your hearts, be it your care to glorify God with your lips and by your lives. Let me further address you as our Lord did the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, whom he had healed (John v. 14), "Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Be always upon your guard against relapsing into sin. You know,

and must allow, that you are in continual danger. And were you to suppose the contrary, your danger would be so much the greater. Therefore be not high-minded, but fear. Employ all your spiritual health in the service and for the honour of your great deliverer; and thus it will be increased. He claims your ardent love, your faithful, active, zealous services. And surely he deserves them all. Consider seriously what you have done for Christ, since the last opportunity of this kind. And I fear you will find much to be humbled for, and I hope much to be thankful for, and to remember with pleasure. If God spareth you to another sacramental season, what will you in the mean time be doing for him? What are you proposing and contriving to do for his interest and glory? I hope your hearts are never without some intentions and projects of this kind. Consider these seriously, and set about the execution of them immediately. Every day in which you do no good, and get no good, is a lost day. It impairs the health of your souls, weakens our comfort and hope, and will lessen your future glory. Let me remind, you further, that death is at hand. These bodies of ours, however healthy and vigorous now, are mortal. They must die. They may soon die. When he who hath the keys of death cometh to summon you hence, may he find you in full spiritual health and vigour; eminently fruitful, exemplary, and useful. Then you will by no means regret that some, yea many years, taken from that length of human life which you might in the course of nature have expected, are added to a glorious and blessed eternity which shall succeed it.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

2 Samuel vii. 19.

And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?

This is the language of high admiration and great astonishment. It was used by David, after he had acknowledged the condescension and goodness of God, in bringing him to the throne of Israel, and in promising many and long-continued blessings to his family. "As if it was but a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto, thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come." And then he adds, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" It may be useful to us, in our attendance on the Lord's supper, to reflect on the great difference between what men, yea the greatest princes, can do in a way of favour and mercy, and what God hath done and will do for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, particularly in forgiving injuries, and conferring benefits.

I. *It is not the manner of men to forgive great and frequent injuries and affronts.*

They are too soon provoked, and sometimes incensed; and not soon nor easily reconciled. They often retain a remembrance of injuries which they profess to have forgiven; and it is difficult to bring them to a real friendship and to manifest the genuine evidences of it. If a prince forgiveth one act of treason, he will scarce forgive a second, and still keep the traitor near him. But our God is rich in mercy. Though he is the offended party, he makes the first overtures of reconciliation, bears with many provocations, waits to be gracious, and multiplies to pardon.

II. *Nor is it the manner of men to confer such benefits as God doth.*

They have no such inexhaustible stores and treasures out of which to draw their gifts. What is it that princes can bestow upon their greatest favourites, compared with the gifts of God? They confer honours and titles; a mere empty sound. God gives us the real honour, the glorious privilege of being his children. Princes may bestow gold, silver, jewels, palaces, estates. But would you, Christians, give up your present comfort and interest in the divine favour, for any of these? The greatest favourite of a prince may be peculiarly wretched, as was the case with Haman. His station is slippery, and he may soon fall into disgrace and ruin. But the Lord will give strength to his people, bless them with peace, and confirm them to the end. The favourite of a prince must die, and his master, with all his wealth and power, cannot save him: but "when flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of his servants, and their portion for ever." The favours of men, even of princes, must be confined to a few. But God can enrich and ennoble thousands and millions. Each shall be as honourable and happy, according to his capacity, as if he were the only favourite. Nay he shall be more honourable and happy than if he were the only one. For God, among his other favours, putteth into the hearts of his children such cordial love to their brethren, that the happiness of every one of them is to each as his own. This is widely different from the temper and manner of men. God will give them all things needful, good, and useful. He hath enough for each, enough for all, and "will supply all their wants out of his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." But what chiefly enhanceth the divine favours, and shows that God's ways and thoughts are above ours, is the method in which his benefits are bestowed. The manner is as wonderful as the favours themselves. They are given with Christ and by him. He first delivered up his own Son for us. "And is this the manner of men, O Lord God?" Do they sacrifice the lives of their children for rebels? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting

life." His gifts are great beyond expression, beyond conception. If the royal state of his kingdom, and his boundless capacity of conferring good, might abate our sense of the worth of his favours (which it ought not to do), the way in which he hath chosen to confer them renders them immense and inaluable. It was doing, if I may so express it, all that a God could do, whose infinite perfections rendered him incapable of suffering himself. Rather than we should perish, he appointed his own Son to die; the most glorious and exalted Being in the universe; excepting always, as the apostle Paul directs us, him who gave him this glory, hath thus highly exalted him, and "put all things under him" (1 Cor. xv. 27). God's own Son spared not himself, but came on this gracious design; drank the bitter cup of affliction and death, that we might live, live to God, and drink of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The heir of heaven is given a ransom for worms. The Son of God is appointed the Redeemer of mean and sinful men. This is a miracle of mercy, the wonder of angels, and will be the admiration of eternity. Our redemption is not the manner of men.

At the Lord's table we see these grand scenes opened upon us. View my soul with wonder, love, and praise, the Son of God delivered up for sinners. See his body broken, and his blood shed; when God, instead of sparing him, was pleased to bruise him and put him to grief. Consider attentively the solemn seal and confirmation of that covenant in which all things desirable and valuable for time and eternity are promised and ensured to thee. View this provision of divine love, this attestation of divine mercy, and the promise of eternal life, with the utmost attention. Receive them with the warmest gratitude; and indulge a lively faith, and a cheerful hope, that he who hath herein dealt wondrously with thee will withhold no good thing from thee.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When David had devoutly acknowledged the very kind and unparalleled manner in which God had conferred such extraordinary favours upon him and his house, and given him such gracious promises, saying, "Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?" he adds, "And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, O God, knowest thy servant." As much as to say, Lord, it is impossible for any words to express the gratitude and affection which I feel in my heart towards thee, for these thy distinguishing and uncommon mercies. I am lost in wonder and joy. But thou knowest thy servant: thou seest every sentiment and desire of my heart, and observest the sincerity and ardour of my devotion, when I want words to express it. I hope that we, my brethren, likewise can appeal to the searcher of hearts, that we are deeply sensible of the value of his benefits, truly

grateful for them; that we have received this evidence of his love, and this pledge of eternal life, with thankfulness and joy. I trust that we have given up ourselves to him with unfeigned, determinate resolution to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. What remains, then, but that I exhort you carefully to cherish these sentiments and dispositions, and with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. May he evermore keep it upon the thoughts of our hearts, that we are his redeemed people, his servants, his property; and obliged, by every consideration of gratitude, duty, and interest, to glorify him in our bodies and our spirits which are his!

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

Colossians i. 21, 22.

And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.

These words suggest to us several important truths, which are peculiarly proper and useful for us to meditate upon when we are approaching to the Lord's table; when we are assembled to commemorate the body of Christ which was broken for us, and his blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins; and to show forth his death, to which we owe our hopes of pardon, peace with God, and eternal life. For here we have,—the view which the apostle gives the Christians at Colosse of their former wretched state; the happy change that was made in it; the means by which this change was brought about; and the great and glorious end which Christ had in view in this whole transaction. Let us meditate,

I. *On their former state.* They were "sometime alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works."

This was their case as heathens and sinners. And it is equally true of all unconverted sinners, whatever profession they make of the religion of Jesus. They are alienated, that is, from God, from his service, or as the apostle elsewhere expresseth it, "from the life of God," or a divine life. They are in a great measure strangers to his nature and perfections; have no clear, rational ideas of them. At least they have no pleasure in conversing with him by meditation and prayer, or in thinking of him. Every act and exercise of the mind, which hath God for its object, is disagreeable to them. Their thoughts and affections are set on other things. He adds, they were "enemies in their

mind by wicked works." They were not only alienated from him; acted as if they had no connexion with him, and no dependence upon him, and were under no obligations to him; but they were enemies to him: for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." They in effect hated him. This apostle speaks of the heathen in general as "haters of God" (Rom. i. 30). They wished that there were no such being, or that he was not perfectly pure and holy. They hated him as a lawgiver and a judge. Now wicked men show this aversion to God by their works. They act in direct contradiction to his holy nature, will, and commands. We can conceive no disposition more unreasonable, vile, and sinful, and no state more wretched and abominable, than this. Let us consider,

II. *The happy change made in their state.* "They were reconciled."

Upon receiving the gospel their enmity was destroyed. The false ideas they had of God, and the dispositions of heart which led them to keep at a distance from him, were changed. They were brought to entertain just and honourable ideas of him; to think of him with pleasure; to love him with all their hearts, as the best and most amiable of beings; to esteem his service reasonable, excellent, and honourable, and to delight in it. They returned to their duty and allegiance, and their works became good in his sight. Upon this, they became the friends of God, took pleasure in his felicity, were concerned for his honour, and devoted themselves entirely to his service. God became their Friend and Father, took pleasure in them, delighted in their services, and graciously interested himself in all their concerns. They were likewise brought into his church, reconciled to his people, and united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love. So great an alteration was made in their temper and state! Observe,

III. *The means by which this change was effected; and that was by the death of Christ.*

"In the body of his flesh through death;" that body of flesh which he was pleased to assume, that he might be capable of suffering, and in which he actually suffered. He cheerfully laid down his life to promote reconciliation between God and man: or, in the language of the apostle, "he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." He removed those obstructions that were in the way of our reconciliation, by offering himself up as a sacrifice for our sins. God graciously provided and accepted this atonement, and receives penitent, believing sinners to his favour. In consequence of Christ's sufferings, he is appointed to communicate the influences of the Holy Spirit by which this great change is made in the heart. So that they,

who were once afar off, are brought nigh by his blood, reconciled to God, and become his children and friends. Let us finally attend,

IV. *To the great end which he had in view in all this.* "To present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight."

This may in part refer to that state of holiness into which converted sinners are brought. They become a peculiar people, holy to the Lord, zealous of good works, and shining in all the graces of the Christian character. But the expression seems rather to refer to the future state, when the whole church shall be completely beautiful, pure, and holy. When nothing unclean shall be found in it, but every heart shall be full of God and full of holiness. When their consciences shall not reproach them; when Satan shall have nothing to accuse them of; and even the holy God himself shall see nothing to blame them for. Thus shall Christ "present the whole church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but it shall be holy and without blemish." This is the happy change, which converting grace makes in ungodly, sensual souls; these the means by which the change is produced, and to this glorious end it leads. Let our thoughts be employed upon each of these particulars while attending this ordinance.

Think, O my soul, of thy past, present, and future state. Think of thy past state. Look back on the sad condition in which divine pity and love found thee; alienated from God; an enemy in thy mind; though that enmity might not show itself in the manner and to the degrees in which the enmity of others appeareth. Thou hast not perhaps been so bad as they; yet too much alienated from the love and service of thy Creator and Benefactor. I would think of this, I would never forget it, that the thought may keep my heart humble, cherish my gratitude to redeeming love, and quicken my zeal in the service of God, my Deliverer and Saviour. Think, O my soul, of thy present state. I hope, through grace, that I am reconciled to God, and united to Christ by faith and a principle of holiness. In consequence of this, I have a right to this ordinance, as a token of my fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. I can now delight in God and in his promises, and draw near to him with comfort as my Friend and Father. I can view all his corrections as consistent with, yea as proceeding from, his paternal love; as intended and adapted to make me more holy and unblameable in his sight. And indulge, O my soul, the pleasing thought of being made and presented perfectly holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight at last. Alas, how defective is my holiness now! My friends perceive some things blameable in me. My own heart blames and reproves me for many sins

and follies which they do not see. And God, who knoweth all things, knoweth how many corruptions and imperfections remain in me, and how defective my graces are. But I look forward with pleasure to the day when my spirit shall be made perfect. I come to this ordinance to increase my fitness for that day. Yet never let me forget to what I am indebted for my privileges and my hopes; even to the love of God, who hath contrived and appointed this method of reconciliation; to the grace of that Saviour who was made flesh and suffered and died, that I might be reconciled to God now, and at last be admitted to glory. Think of this love, O my soul, while thou art eating and drinking at his table. Think of it as extended to all thy Christian brethren, that thy love to them and gratitude to our common Father may be strengthened. With silent reverence and thankfulness wonder and adore, and renew thy resolution to live as a disciple of Christ, a child of God, a brother to all thy fellow-Christians, and an heir of heaven.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When St. Paul had described the happiness of true Christians, as having been reconciled to God, through the death of Christ, in order that they might be presented holy and unblameable before him, he adds (v. 23), "if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." This suggests to us our duty, and how we may expect to obtain this state of complete holiness and felicity. We plainly see that it is not sufficient to make the most solemn profession of religion, to enter into and renew covenant engagements to be the Lord's, and for awhile to practise those duties which our Lord requires of us. But we are to continue grounded in the faith and settled. In order to this, it will be proper and necessary often to consider the evidences of Christianity, or the grounds upon which we believe the gospel to be true, and trust in its divine author. But as the will and affections often influence the judgment, great care must be taken that our whole temper and conduct be formed upon the principles of the gospel; that we be always deeply sensible of the reasonableness and excellency of obedience, and continue fixed in our purpose to cleave to the Lord. Let none of the temptations or afflictions of life ever move us from our faith, our subjection to Christ, and our Christian hope. There is no surer evidence, indeed no sure evidence at all, that we shall be presented unblameable in his sight, but our being holy in all manner of conversation. Let it be our daily concern and endeavour to live in a holy, just, and unblameable manner, and persevere to the end; still maintaining our dependence upon Christ, and abiding in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

John iv. 14.

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

It is a signal instance of the great wisdom and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ that he hath been pleased, by himself and his apostles, to describe spiritual blessings to us under various figures and comparisons, taken from the things of this life, from what we frequently see and are much conversant with. By this means the blessings of the gospel are often brought to our minds, and we are led to cherish those affections and practise those duties to which the divine favours oblige us. As faith in Christ and dependence upon him are the great support of a holy life, and the means of our edification, they are described by coming to him and building upon him as the foundation of the church. They are described by feeding on him as the bread of life, to satisfy and strengthen our hungry souls. And in the words now before us they are represented as drinking of that water, which he hath to give, in order to refresh and nourish our souls. The water, to which our Lord here refers, signifies the influences of the Spirit. And we have two things said concerning them,—that they deliver from the greatest evils; and are the source of the greatest good.

I. *They deliver from the greatest evils.*

He who heartily receiveth my gospel shall have such assistances from my Spirit, to cleanse, to sanctify, and strengthen him, that he shall never thirst. For the illustration of this, it may be observed that there is in all men a thirst, a desire of happiness, or of something to satisfy the soul. Carnal men seek this happiness in the creature. It is the whole business of their lives to search it out and secure it. But they are always disappointed. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the heart with possessing. The earth saith, Happiness is not in me. The sea saith, It is not in me. Wealth, honour, pleasure, friends, all say, when the trial is made, It is not in us. It is only to be found in God and his favour. Divine grace doth not destroy the appetite, but directs it to its proper object. The water which Christ gives, his sacred instructions and influences, quiet the agitation of the mind about worldly things, cool its fervent heat after the enjoyments and pleasures of life. Its thirst after created good is moderated. The Christian is no longer uncertain where happiness lies, but seeth it to be in God, and an in-

terest in him as his portion and supreme good. There he seeks it earnestly, and there he finds it. His inordinate passions are subdued; every thing irregular and tumultuous is abated and gradually composed. The enlightened Christian becomes dead to sin and dead to the world. He thirsts not after earthly things, either through necessity or variety; but hath all things in God. There he settles with delightful composure. There he finds a good, fitted to the taste of his soul, capable of filling its largest desires, and there it is fully satisfied. He now thirsts after nothing but larger measures of divine influences, greater improvements in knowledge and holiness, and more sensible manifestations of divine love to his soul. And he shall not faint and languish for want of suitable relief. The water that Christ giveth is likewise,

II. *A source of the greatest good.*

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" the water is multiplied, as it were, in him, so that it becomes an ever-flowing fountain of joy and happiness. This intimates that true religion is a living principle in the soul; a new nature, a divine nature; that it doth not consist merely in an alteration of sentiments, much less of external rites, and forms, and services; but in the principles and affections of the soul. The Christian's motives are inward. There is a law in his heart which excites him to his duty, and bears him above all his difficulties and temptations. The expression intimates that this principle is strong and active. It operates freely and without constraint; like a fountain pouring forth its streams. He is not influenced by worldly views and motives, which are always weak, and often varying; nor doth he habitually act through fear of wrath, and with the terrors of a slave; but from gratitude and love, and the evident vigorous tendencies of a new and divine nature implanted in him. The fountain of holiness within flows on. He studies and labours daily to grow wiser and better. He is uneasy except he finds that he makes some advances in the divine life. He is ambitious and zealous to do good to others, to communicate to them the comforts he feels, and to animate and refresh their souls. This is agreeable to what our Lord says, "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow living water;" that is, the religious principle within excites him to labour diligently and constantly for the conversion and salvation of others. The expression likewise intimates that it is an abiding, lasting principle in the soul. Like a spring of water continually flowing on, and never stopping. His inward satisfaction remains, and will be increasing and strengthening if this principle be duly cultivated, and the proper means for its increase diligently used and improved. And then we are directed to the consummation of this

character and happiness. It springs up "into everlasting life." Grace is glory begun here, and it will terminate in a state of complete and eternal happiness; in the enjoyment of God; in likeness to him; in the rest and felicity of all the capacities and powers of the soul in him. The Christian aims at this glory in all his religious services, yea in all his earthly business and enjoyments. At length his satisfaction shall be entire and uninterrupted, and he cannot form a wish for any thing better.

Is this indeed the case, O my soul? I hope thou knowest, by some small experience, that it is so. What a noble principle then is true religion. How glorious is that gospel which renews, sanctifies, and satisfies the soul. How highly art thou indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ who gives thee this water, who invites thee to come to him and drink. How great is the power of his Spirit that can implant and nourish this sacred principle in the soul, and carry it on to maturity. All my attainments, comforts, and hopes are owing to a supply of his Spirit accompanying the means of grace. No ordinance is better adapted to strengthen and invigorate this principle within me than the Lord's supper. It supports the life of holiness in the soul. It makes this well of water, as it were, spring up more plentifully, and so becomes an earnest of everlasting life. I would come to it with ardent desire. I read that David, when he was athirst, said, "Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" And shall I not say, Oh that I might at this time have a plentiful supply of the water of life! Here is provision made for such a supply. Lord, I am now come to drink. I would approach the well of salvation with thankfulness and joy, and may I now be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and drink of the river of thy pleasure!

AFTER PARTAKING.

Our common springs are fed by unseen channels, but the providence of God directs their course. It is so in spiritual concerns. Let us say with the psalmist, "All my springs are in thee." I hope we have been refreshed and strengthened by this ordinance, and are growing more meet for the possession of eternal life. Let us show that this is the case by not thirsting after the world; not being fond of any of its enjoyments and pleasures. Let us leave all its polluting, unsatisfying joys to those who know no better; whose taste is corrupt and depraved, and who live only to the flesh. Let us not be eager after its innocent joys, but deny ourselves, and moderate our thirst for them. Let us go on to seek our refreshment and happiness in God; for there only shall we find it. Let us cultivate the religious principle with the utmost care, and watch diligently against every thing that would weaken it; every thing that

would interrupt this sacred stream. Still may it flow on, and be more plentiful every day, till it end in everlasting life. To this purpose let us be often saying, in the language of the Samaritan woman, "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not," and till at length I shall have no need to come any more, as now, to these ordinances to draw.

MEDITATION XL.

Romans v. 11.

And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This the apostle shows in the words now before us. They are a proper subject of meditation at the Lord's supper. He hath said in the beginning of the chapter that we "not only rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but we glory in tribulations also;" considering the many advantages which result from them, especially their tendency to train us up for a better state. He then describes the amazing love of God in giving his Son to die for us. He mentions the fruits of his death, or the benefits which he hath obtained for us thereby. He argues, that "if, when enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," which he employs for our interest and benefit. He then adds that we are not only entitled to salvation in the life which is to come, but "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Thus a foundation is laid for making the present life comfortable. Here we have the Christian's privilege and duty, and the foundation of it.

I. *We have an account of what is both the privilege and duty of the true Christian*, namely, "to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is a foundation laid for our holy joy and boasting in God, and he reasonably expects that we should cherish this temper. As his reconciled creatures and servants, we have cause to boast and triumph in our covenant relation to him and interest in him. We were once enemies. This is evidently implied in the idea of our being reconciled, as well as asserted by the apostle. But being by repentance and faith reconciled, the Lord becomes our God, our friend, and our father, and we have a covenant title to every favour and blessing which can make us happy. We can now rejoice in his boundless power which be-

fore was our terror; for it is now engaged for our security and salvation. We can look up to him and converse with him, though so infinitely great and glorious, without being terrified by his excellencies, or slavishly fearful of his wrath. It is our duty to be always joyful in the Lord; to reflect with the highest pleasure upon the riches of his love, the extent of his power, and his faithfulness to all his promises and engagements. It becomes us to express this joy in all our devotional approaches to God; and whenever we bow our knees before him, to abound in praise and thanksgiving. To be always mourning and complaining at his footstool is very unsuitable to his infinite love, and the friendly terms on which he graciously permits us to approach to him. We ought likewise to express this joy in God in our converse with others; to cultivate and manifest habitual cheerfulness. This is fit in itself, considering what favours God hath shown us, and what hopes he hath set before us. It is a temper pleasing to him who delighteth in the prosperity of his servants. It is honourable to religion, and may animate others to the faithful discharge of their duty. No affliction should damp this sacred affection. For whatever we suffer here, God will be our strength, our guide unto death, and our portion for ever. Let us then resolve with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." But let us be careful to remember, that we are to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He hath saved us from sin and destruction, and brought us into this peaceful, joyful state. He supports the work of grace in our hearts, and gives us so much cause to rejoice. And when we express our joy before God, and offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, even the fruit of our lips, all is to be done in the name and through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Let us now reflect,

II. *On the ground of this privilege and duty.*

Whence have we reason, why is it our duty, to rejoice in God? It is because by Christ "we have received the atonement." So our translators render it, but very improperly. For it is God who received and accepted the atonement made for our sins by the death of his Son. The word is "the reconciliation," and so a like word had been rendered in the preceding verse; "we were reconciled to God." We have the reconciliation foretold and promised by the Jewish prophets, typified and represented by the sacrifices, and other methods of reconciliation appointed by the law. This reconciliation is offered to all. Ministers beseech all men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Yet none but true believers receive this reconciliation. Others will not believe, will not comply with the terms of the gospel; so that they have no right to joy in God. But the true Christian approves this method of reconciliation, receives it with full consent of will,

and grateful affection to the kind mediator. He rests upon it as the ground of his hope. He therefore may take comfort and rejoice in it. Now, since God hath bestowed upon us so great a favour, and brought us into so honourable, secure, and happy a state, we shall be ungrateful to him, and wanting to ourselves and to the credit of religion, if we do not humbly boast and joy in him; if we do not celebrate his praises, and, like the apostles amidst the greatest sufferings and censures, be always rejoicing.

This ordinance is well adapted to impress these truths upon our hearts and cherish our holy joy in God. Fain would I rejoice in the Lord (will the Christian say) at all times and in every circumstance, but especially in his house and at his table. I here perceive more clearly than at other times the state into which I am brought, a state of fellowship with God. I am seated as a child at his table, and allowed to feast with him in token of reconciliation, as was the case in some of the ancient sacrifices. I have the pleasure to see many of my fellow Christians joint partakers of this ordinance, and of the grace which it represents. I hope my heart is formed and moulded according to the benevolent maxims of the gospel, so that I can heartily rejoice in this brotherly union. I here clearly view the death of Christ figured out as the means of reconciliation. I see an emblem of that blood which cemented the breach and made the atonement. Thus I am reminded that I am justified and reconciled to God by the death of his Son. I have here likewise the pledge and assurance of final salvation. This ordinance confirms my faith in that delightful truth that Jesus, through whom I am reconciled, though now absent from us, is alive; concerned for my interest, and employing all his authority and power for my salvation. What then have I to fear? What should hinder my joy in God? I am taught by this service to expect his second coming, when he will perfect the deliverance and salvation of his servants. Yet, alas, how cold is my love to God and the Redeemer! How little am I affected with the blessings of reconciliation, peace, and hope! How defective are my gratitude and obedience! May this new approach to God, as my reconciled Father and my supreme felicity, raise and strengthen my hope and my joy, and confirm my resolution to live to him who died for me and rose again, that I may have ground for constant, yea, for everlasting joy!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When the apostle Paul had been speaking of God's reconciling the world to himself, and committing to the apostles the ministry of reconciliation, he adds (2 Cor. vi. 1), "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." So would I address and beseech you, that you would walk agreeably to so high and honourable a

privilege; that you improve it to more fervent love, more stedfast obedience, and a warmer zeal for the honour and interest of God. That you live near to him in the exercises of lively devotion, and manifest habitual gratitude and cheerfulness. Watch with the utmost care against every thing that would draw your hearts from God and interrupt your joy in him. Have we been enabled to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Let this spoil our relish for all sinful pleasures. Let it promote our moderation to all those animal and earthly pleasures which are in themselves lawful. If they ever become our chief joy, they will alienate the soul from its Creator and portion, and indispose it for divine and angelic pleasures. Let all our innocent gratifications lead us to him who giveth us a capacity for them and the means of obtaining them. Let them all terminate in him. Whatever is a cause of our rejoicing should strengthen our affection to him, and promote our cheerful, stedfast obedience. Let no afflictions or sorrows prevent our rejoicing in him who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, and who will cause them all to work together for our good. Finally, let all the joy we have in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, lead our thoughts to, and promote our preparation for, a state of everlasting nearness to him, and fellowship with him, in his presence above, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

MEDITATION XLI.

1 Peter ii. 6, 7.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.

The design of our assembling at the table of the Lord is to remember him with gratitude and seriousness. It will tend to promote our edification and comfort by that ordinance, to remember and consider him as the foundation of our faith and of our hope; of all our expectations of pardon, acceptance with God, and eternal life. Let us carefully attend to the view here given of him by St. Peter; of the happiness of those who believe in him, and how they stand affected to him in consequence of it. Let us consider,

I. *The view here given of Jesus Christ.* "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious."

The Christian church is described under the idea of a building. Christ is represented as the foundation-stone, according

to the prophecy of Isaiah (chap. xxviii. 16), from whence St. Peter takes the passage now before us. He is the foundation of the Christian church; the author and finisher of our faith, and the supporter of that religion which he hath published to the world. He is the chief corner-stone; that which hath the greatest honour, and is the most excellent of its kind. He is so called, because he supports the church in general, and all the privileges which as Christians we enjoy, and all the hopes which his faithful followers entertain. He also unites and knits together the whole church, collected from Jews and Gentiles, as the corner-stone unites the sides of a building. He is called "elect and precious;" chosen of God to this honour on account of his great dignity and his spotless character. He is highly valuable and esteemed in the sight of God and all wise and good beings. This foundation, the prophet and the apostle say, was laid by God himself. He gave his own Son to be the Saviour of the world; set him forth to be a propitiation, and hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour. Let us observe,

II. *The happiness of those who believe on him.*

To believe on him is not merely to believe and profess his doctrine, but sincerely to receive him both as a teacher and a Saviour; to submit our whole souls to his authority, and trust and rest upon him alone for salvation, as the whole building rests upon the foundation. Those who thus believe on him "shall not be confounded." This contains an awful intimation that they who do not believe on him, who are not united to him by faith, and love, and obedience, as the building is to the foundation, shall be confounded. They shall be ashamed of their neglect of him, and disappointed in all those things which they make their confidence. They will be ashamed and vexed as a man who builds upon a bad foundation is, when he sees the superstructure tottering and falling. He will be confounded in having trusted to "a refuge of lies;" to a corner stone which will not bear the weight he lays upon it. But they who believe shall never be confounded. Their hopes are firm. Their edifice is stable. They shall be settled in peace and comfort. They shall never be ashamed of the cause in which they have embarked, and the pains they have taken to support that cause; to edify themselves and others in their most holy faith, and to make continued improvements in the divine life. The expression implies more; his hopes shall be fully answered; his expectations shall be far outdone. So the servants of God in all ages have found; for he is "a tried stone, a sure foundation." Again observe,

III. *How believers stand affected to Christ in consequence of the security and happiness which they enjoy by him. He is*

precious to them. "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious."

While others reject and speak against him, and stumble at this corner stone, Christ is highly honoured by them that believe. He is preciousness itself. They esteem and value him above every thing that can be compared with him. Whatever mean and undervaluing thoughts others may have of him, the soul which hath fled to him and trusted in him as an all-sufficient Saviour, esteems and loves him with sincerity and ardour, boasts of him and triumphs in him. The real Christian, having experienced composure, peace, and hope, as the consequence of his sincere faith in the Redeemer, esteems him precious on account of his personal excellencies, and precious in every office which he sustains, and every relation in which he stands to his church.

Let me now ask you, my Christian friends, what think ye of Christ? What reception hath he met with from you? How stand ye affected to Jesus? Try the foundation of your faith and hope by this test, Is Christ precious to you? Do you think of him, love him, delight to hear of his glory and grace? Do you love his gospel and all his commandments and ordinances? Do you cordially love all, however they may differ from you in sentiments, modes, and forms, who appear to serve Christ, and live agreeably to his laws? Do you breathe after more of his temper and spirit, lament your deficiency in it, and press on toward perfection?

I hope, may the Christian say, that I have built on this foundation, and am trusting my whole salvation upon it. I rejoice in Christ Jesus, esteem him most amiable and lovely in all his relations and offices. I feel, and oh that I could feel more of a grateful sense of my immense obligations to him, for my recovery from sin, for all my religious privileges, enjoyments, and hopes! I would show in my whole conversation how precious he is to my soul. I come to his table to manifest my faith in him and veneration for him; to bear a public testimony to his divine authority, his spotless character, and dying love. I hope the thoughts of these now possess my heart. I would particularly reflect on what he hath already done and is still doing for me, as head of the church, and intercessor for all his people. And may this service melt my too insensible heart into an esteem and affection for him, and a cheerful confidence in him, proportioned to his amazing love to me. I would for the future think of him more frequently and affectionately; love him more ardently, delight to hear of his grace and glory, and equally delight to hear of his laws, and precepts, and example. I would love his ordinances and his people, and earnestly aspire after more of his temper and spirit. If this be the desire and resolution of our souls, we shall be welcome to his table. The

bread and wine used there will bring his sufferings to your remembrance, by which he showed his veneration for the holiness and authority of his heavenly Father, and his submission to the divine will, and manifested the greatness of his pity and love towards us. And while this service contributes to make him more precious and valuable in your esteem, it will, I hope, dispose and enable you, in every circumstance of future life, to render unto the Lord according to the benefits which you have received.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When we have been attending the Lord's supper, hearing of his suitableness to our circumstances, and feeling that he is indeed precious, how fit and desirable is it that we should seriously regard that exhortation of St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 2), "Seeing ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." We have seen how suitable Christ is to the necessities and desires of an awakened sinner, of an humble penitent, and of every true Christian. We have, I hope, a strong relish for his preciousness and grace. Let it be our care to preserve that relish, and to live by the faith of the Son of God. Let us seek daily supplies of grace from God, the fountain of all good, through the mediation, and by the hands, of our merciful high priest. Let us desire further acquaintance with his word, that pure, unadulterated milk, which is adapted to nourish and delight the soul, and to promote its growth in every virtue. Let us seek further instruction and consolation from it, as earnestly as new-born babes seek nourishment from the breast. And let us receive it with the meekness and simplicity of little children. As you profess to believe in Christ, to be fixed on him as the sure foundation, labour to be edified in every branch of virtue and goodness; to rise higher and higher every day in your religious improvements; that you may do honour to the foundation, and receive greater honour from God. In order to this, remember and daily reflect upon what you have been now doing. In all your devotions consider Jesus as your advocate, and hope for acceptance in the beloved. Manifest to all that know and see you that Jesus is precious to you; by hating and shunning every sin, every appearance of evil, which he hateth; by loving and practising that holiness which he loveth, and of which he hath set you a spotless example. Labour to bring others to know, serve, and trust him, and thus promote their happiness. Endeavour that he may be precious to you under all your afflictions, as your pattern, your compassionate high priest, and your hope; that he may be precious to you in your dying moments, as the resurrection and the life. In short, "Whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him." Thus, by

being built on this foundation, you will become spiritual temples, holy to the Lord, inhabited by his Spirit, enriched and adorned with those graces which are the truest, brightest ornaments. And at length the head stone of the glorious edifice will be brought forth with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace, unto it."

MEDITATION XLII.

Exodus xxxiii. 18.

And he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory.

The psalmist speaks, in very devout strains, of seeing "the power and glory of God in his sanctuary," as what was the object of his warmest desire. And those that have been favoured with such a sight will earnestly desire that it may be repeated, and often adopt the language of Moses, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." God had promised Moses, as the leader of Israel, that his presence should go with them and give them rest. Moses had prayed for this blessing on behalf of Israel, and God repeats the promise; "I will do what thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name," that is, I treat thee as a particular friend and favourite. Then Moses prayed that he might see the glory of the Lord.

This is a proper petition for us when we are approaching the Lord's table. It should be our desire to know and experience more of the favour and spiritual influence of God, in order to preserve and improve in us a devout and holy temper. Moses was too wise to suppose that the essence of God could be seen. He knew him to be a pure spirit, an invisible being. But having heard his voice out of the pillar of cloud, he seems to have imagined that there was some glorious appearance, wrapt up in the darkness, which might be seen: some more plain and sensible representation of the glory of the Lord. This he desired to see. Not, we may suppose, out of mere curiosity, but to have his mind more deeply impressed with the majesty of God; to have his veneration and love to him increased, his activity in the service of Jehovah promoted, and his ability and resolution to bear up under the fatigues and discouragements which he met with, strengthened. God, in much mercy, denies *part* of his request, telling him, that he could not see his face and live. The resplendent glory would be too great for mortality to bear. Even St. Paul was overpowered with a transient vision of the divine glory, which left "a thorn in his flesh," or a great weakness upon his nerves. Nay, the Israelites could not bear the lustre of Moses' countenance after he had been with God, but he was obliged to cover his face when he spoke to them. Yet God kindly granted him some part of his request. He in-

dulged him with some manifestation of his glory; some bright display of himself, called his back parts, and as much as Moses could bear. But he indulged him to the utmost, in proclaiming his name to him, and discovering his goodness. Moses prayed to see his glory. God caused all his goodness to pass before him; proclaiming himself the "Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and pardoning iniquity." God's goodness and mercy are his glory, his honour, and his delight. These titles of Jehovah afford peculiar support and pleasure to humble, pious souls, amidst their consciousness of innumerable sins and imperfections. It is comfortable to us to think, that God would have us know him more by the glory of his mercy, than of his majesty; as exhibiting his goodness and reconcileableness, rather than displaying his supremacy and power.

This remarkable and instructive story will suggest some proper thoughts to us during our attendance on this service. It naturally leads us to admire and adore the condescending goodness of God to his ancient servant. Men are charmed with the condescension of a prince who shows himself to his subjects on particular occasions, and gratifies their natural and strong curiosity. What a stoop of grace was it in the King of of kings to reveal himself thus to Moses! It was merciful in him to discover what was discovered, and to conceal what was concealed. Whatever views of the glory of God we are at any time favoured with, especially in the acts of worship, they ought to be ascribed to his condescension and grace. It may justly fill us with surprise, and lead us to say with high admiration, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou shouldest thus visit him?" This subject should excite us earnestly to desire some manifestations of the glory of the Lord, especially at this ordinance. It would be ignorance and madness for us to expect or desire any such favour as was shown to Moses. But God hath ways of discovering himself to his people as their kind and gracious Father, which will contribute to their edification and delight. His indulging Moses' request, though it might seem too bold, encourageth us to pray that he would show us his glory. He doth it indeed in his works. The heavens declare his glory. The earth is full of his presence and riches. But he manifests himself in peculiar ways to his faithful servants, especially in his house, where they behold his beauty and taste his grace. At the Lord's table we have a clearer display of his goodness and mercy than in any other scene and circumstance. We see it in the appointment of a redeemer and mediator. We see it in the sufferings of his dear Son. In this event the riches of his grace are displayed. By it we are reconciled to God; and divine influences, purchased by Jesus, are communicated by him to his people to

quicken and comfort their hearts. His ordinances and the consolations of his Spirit strengthen and delight every devout worshipper, and fit and prepare them for brighter manifestations of his glory in the future world. As such views of the divine goodness, such displays of his glory are delightful, so they are transforming. They show us our meanness and deformity, and so promote our humiliation and penitence. They dispose us cordially to receive the gospel as the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, and teacheth us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. And they lead us to desire and labour after a greater likeness to God, and to be more exact imitators of him, as his dear children.

May this glory shine upon my soul (will every devout Christian say) while I see the elements representing the death of my Saviour, and so proclaiming the goodness of the Lord. While I taste them may I taste and see that the Lord is good, and that blessed is the man that trusteth in him. If he is pleased then to manifest himself to my soul, I would receive the discovery with the greatest humility. While God passed by Moses and proclaimed his name, Moses bowed his head to the earth and worshipped. Thus would I show all the marks of the profoundest veneration and humility of mind. Nothing appears more venerable in my eyes than the mercy of the Lord. I would fear him and his goodness. The more I see of his grace, the more ashamed would I be of my sins and of my great unlikeness to him. The more would I labour to resemble my indulgent Father, to secure an interest in his goodness, mercy, and truth; and improve it to engage me to serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of my life. And may he proclaim his name, and make himself known to me at that ordinance, that this blessed effect may be produced by my attendance upon it!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When we have been observing this institution, can we adopt the words of David (Ps. xlviii. 8, 9), and say, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God? We have thought of," seen and felt "his loving kindness in the midst of his temple." Let us be thankful for any indulgence of this kind; for any spiritual influences which have fixed our thoughts, raised our devotion, and strengthened our faith and hope, and our resolutions for universal obedience. Whatever degrees of the divine glory have been manifested to us, let us improve them to God's honour, to the credit of our profession, and our usefulness in future life. After that transaction of Moses with the great Jehovah, which we have been contemplating, "his face shone." All Israel saw by this that he had been with God, and remarkably favoured by him. If God hath indulged us with any peculiar discoveries of his presence and love, let us with the

warmest gratitude ascribe the praise to him. It may be most prudent and most agreeable to that deep humility which such discoveries will always excite, to keep our sublimest joys locked up in our own breasts; except we meet with some judicious, experienced, and humble Christians, to whom we may communicate them, in order to engage their thankfulness on our account, and their assistance in improving such a signal favour. But there is a propriety and fitness in bearing testimony before others, that religion's ways are pleasantness and all her paths peace. It is evidently our duty to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father." Let our holy, just, and unblameable conversation manifest that we have seen the glory of the Lord; that we have been with Jesus: otherwise all pretences to the presence of God and communion with him are hypocritical. There have been some great pretenders to intercourse with heaven and communications from above, who have acted as if they had had fellowship with Satan. But we have not so learned Christ. Let our tempers be spiritual, heavenly, mild, benevolent, and let our whole lives adorn religion. "Arise then and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Let such views of the divine glory lead us to long for that blessed world where we shall enjoy brighter manifestations of it. Moses in glory could bear the transfiguration of Christ, though the apostles while in flesh could not. There the soul will be strengthened to bear the effulgence of divine glory. Our visions of it here are comparatively small and transient and uncertain; there they will be constant, large, and fully satisfying. We shall never cease to feel the happy effects of it. Our souls fixed near the Almighty's throne, like planets in orbs round the sun, will constantly receive lustre from him and reflect it all around. They will be for ever brightening and improving in their likeness to him, and consequently in their felicity. Let us long for that resplendent day, when "the Lord God shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory." Amen.

MEDITATION XLIII.

1 Peter i. 12.

Which things the angels desire to look into.

The things which the apostle tells us the angels desire to look into, are the salvation of true Christians, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow: which the Jewish prophets searched into, and which the apostles preached, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. From whence we may justly infer, how important and valuable these things are in themselves; and how worthy they are of our most serious and

diligent study; especially as a necessary preparation for the happiness of the heavenly world.

In this connexion it is natural to observe how excellent and useful an ordinance the Lord's supper is, which immediately directs our thoughts to those things which the angels desire to look into. Indeed all the ordinances of the gospel answer this end. These interesting topics run through all our prayers, thanksgivings, and discourses: and if angels were to preach to men, doubtless they would principally insist upon those things into which they intensely look. But this ordinance was particularly appointed to bring them to our remembrance, and to fix upon our hearts a deep and habitual sense of their great importance.

I. *It is appointed to bring these things to our remembrance.*

The glories of the Redeemer, and of the redemption which he hath wrought out, shine in every Christian ordinance. But here is, as it were, a constellation of them; many glories united and set in the most striking point of light. Our thoughts are here led to the incarnation of Christ, which the angels beheld and adored with so much joy. They contemplated his being made flesh and dwelling upon earth, which rendered him capable of suffering and dying for our sakes. We are here led to consider the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, which the Spirit revealed to the prophets, which they searched diligently into, and which the angels beheld with joyful surprise. We see that wonderful scene, the most wonderful which human eyes ever beheld, the body of Christ broken for our sins, and his blood shed to obtain our pardon, peace, and eternal life. We remember that Saviour, who was once for a while "made a little lower than the angels, that he might taste of death for every man." We see the manner in which God's covenant transactions with mankind have been carried on and ratified; even by sacrifice; and the gracious terms on which he admits guilty men to his favour. We view the method by which the Spirit was obtained for us, by whose assistances we are strengthened with all might in the inner man. The death of Christ, which we here contemplate, was that amazing event by which angels and men are united in one sacred society, joined under Jesus their common head and Lord, and hold communion one with another. We are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, admitted into the household of God, and joined to the holy family in heaven and earth. We here testify our faith in the glories which succeeded Christ's sufferings, and in his second coming to raise and reward all his faithful followers. These are the things which angels look into, and they are here brought to our remembrance. Further,

II. *This ordinance tends to fix a deep and habitual sense of these things upon our minds.*

We have not the capacities of angels. Our bodies are clogs to the operations of our minds. While we are in flesh, we are too much impressed with visible, sensible things, and too little with those that are unseen and are the objects of faith and hope. Therefore our Lord hath appointed these elements of bread and wine, as sensible signs and emblems of his body and blood; that our souls may with greater ease and fixedness dwell upon the objects represented by them. We not only see them, but take and eat the bread and drink the wine. This hath an apparent tendency to collect the thoughts, and direct them to that adorable Saviour whose dying love we commemorate. This is more a personal, deliberate act than, I fear, we generally consider other ordinances to be; and therefore so much the more likely to answer the great ends intended by it. Methinks, the recollection of the angels studying these things should fix our thoughts more intensely upon them. St. Paul, when he is giving the Corinthians some directions, suited to that age, about the dress of women in the solemn assembly, urgeth their regard to them by this argument, "because of the angels;" who are spectators of our worship, and may join in such parts of it as suit their circumstances. But probably they never look so intensely into these things, in any place or circumstances on earth, as when they see a Christian church devoutly celebrating this ordinance. They attend the solemn assembly, and adore with us the manifold wisdom and love of God. They must be peculiarly pleased with the reverence and seriousness of devout communicants, and with the fervour of their affection to our Lord Jesus Christ, as far as these heavenly spirits are capable of discerning it. I may say of this ordinance, as the psalmist saith of the manna, that it is "angels' food." They are nourished and delighted with these affecting scenes.

I would imitate the devout angels, and bend my whole attention to look into these things with reverential wonder and humility; with the highest delight, and most ardent praise, that such blessings are granted to the sinful children of men. These are the subjects I am here to fix my thoughts upon. I have more reason to look attentively into these things than the angels, as I am more immediately interested in them. Otherwise I shall show a very base disposition; great ingratitude to my most munificent benefactor, and a wretched insensibility to my own interest. Let me likewise be thoughtful, sincere, and solemn in renewing my vows and engagements to the Lord. Let me remember Solomon's exhortation, "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, It was an error. Why should God be angry at thy voice," in promising what thou dost not intend to perform, "and destroy the work of thy hands?"

AFTER PARTAKING.

Let us now, in the language of the apostle Paul, charge ourselves "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels," that we observe these things: the things which have been said: the things which we have done, and whatever hath been transacted between God and our souls. Let us carefully attend to that exhortation of the apostle Peter, grounded upon what he had said of the angels' looking into these things, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind," be active, steady, resolute in the service of your divine master. "Be sober and hope unto the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." You know that he will appear. You then expect grace; even the highest, noblest manifestation of the divine favour. Hope for it in all your sufferings, and to the end of life. Let this hope engage you to a diligent study of divine things, to the utmost sobriety, watchfulness, and stedfastness. Thus by continually improving in knowledge and holiness, you will at length be carried by angels to the heavenly mansions, and be like them in immortal glory and felicity.

MEDITATION XLIV.*

COLOSSIANS I. 13.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

IT is proper and useful sometimes to remind those who attend the Lord's supper of the privileges and advantages which they enjoy, as Christians and protestants; in order to excite their thankfulness for them, and diligent care to make a right improvement of them. It is very proper to do this at the Lord's table, where we assemble to praise God for his goodness, and especially for spiritual blessings. The ordinance itself indeed is a favour for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; as it is adapted to improve our Christian graces, and increase our comfort and hope. Let me now endeavour to excite and strengthen your gratitude to him, "who hath delivered you from the power of darkness, and hath translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son." It may cherish our gratitude, increase our love to God, and confirm our purposes of holy obedience, to consider the state of darkness from which we are delivered, and the glorious kingdom into which we are translated or introduced: to reflect on the difference between the service in which we are

* November 5.

now engaging, and what would probably have been our employment, had we continued in that darkness which involved our ancestors while they were Pagans; and had not God delivered us from that corrupt, superstitious, and dangerous form of Christianity which we call popery.

I. *We are descended from heathen ancestors,* who were under the power of darkness; and the subjects of a kingdom, full of ignorance, idolatry, sin, and misery. Had not the gospel been sent to us, we might now have been joining in sacrifices, offered to devils or demons; paying homage to the departed spirits of our kings and generals, and commemorating their heroic deeds. We might perhaps have been attending the sacrifice of a beloved child or friend, offered in the most cruel manner to an imaginary god; or joining in some other rites and services, inhuman, impure, and scandalous, for which the idolaters of this island were notorious. It should excite and cherish our fervent gratitude, that we are translated from this state into the kingdom of God's dear Son; that we are favoured with Christian privileges, especially this ordinance, so excellent in itself, so pleasing to a holy God, and so conducive to our edification. Again,

II. *Let us acknowledge the goodness of God, in delivering us from the power of popish darkness, and making us subjects of that kingdom of his dear Son, which is not of this world.*

The kingdom of the pope is (as St. John foretold it would be, Rev. xvi. 10), full of darkness, little better than the former darkness of Paganism. Its subjects are not allowed to read the scriptures. They are discouraged and kept from free inquiry, and their public prayers and praises are offered up in an unknown tongue. But let me here particularly remind you, how grossly the Lord's supper is misrepresented, dishonoured, and perverted by popery. Falsehood, sacrilege, and idolatry, are mingled with this sacred service, notorious falsehood is mingled with it. The unhappy papists are taught and obliged to believe transubstantiation; or that upon pronouncing the words of consecration over the elements by the priest, "This is my body," the bread and wine are actually changed into the substance of Christ's flesh: a doctrine absurd in itself, contrary to our understandings and our senses, and contrary to the very nature of the ordinance, which is a sign, not the thing signified. You might have been infatuated to have believed this; or have hypocritically pretended to believe it; or, if you had possessed the courage to deny your belief of it, might have been doomed to a cruel death. The papists say that "this sacrament is a proper atonement for those on whose account it is presented; and that there is a fresh offering of Christ every time the mass is celebrated." This is a high indignity to our blessed Lord, as

if his atonement was not sufficient. It is contrary to scripture, which declares that Christ *once* suffered, that the body of Jesus was offered *once* for all. This sacrament is a commemoration of a sacrifice once offered, not offering a new one. Again, sacrilege is mingled with this service. The popish laity are denied the wine, because the church saith that the bread contains the whole body of Christ; a notion grounded on the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation; contrary to the command of Christ, that his disciples should all drink of it; contrary to the practice of the apostles and first Christians, who all ate of that bread and drank of that cup; and it is a wicked usurpation on the rights of Christians. Once more, idolatry is mingled with this holy institution. The papists worship the host, that is, the sacramental bread, the consecrated wafer; as if Christ's real body were present. They kneel as it passeth by them in the streets, and worship it with divine worship when lifted up at the altar. Thus they worship a god which the priest hath made.

These are the doctrines and practices of popish countries. And had not the kindness of God appeared to us in bringing about the Reformation, these had been our tenets and practices; or we had died martyrs for refusing to receive and comply with them. In Christians who know the value of this ordinance, and have found the pleasure and advantage of a serious attendance upon it, these considerations will promote great thankfulness to God for deliverance from all these errors, and increase their veneration for this institution. We, my Christian and protestant brethren, have this service in its original simplicity and purity. Here is no change of the substance pretended; no crossings and bowings practised. Every thing relating to it is transacted agreeably to the New Testament rule and pattern, and there is no infringement upon Christian liberty. And now, let me seriously inquire, What do ye more than others? Are you duly grateful to God for your better light, and juster notions of this ordinance? Are you regular, serious, and devout in your attendance upon it? And are you careful to improve it to those religious and practical purposes for which it was instituted? I hope this is your prevailing character, and that you will now heartily concur in such reflections and resolutions as these.

I am coming to this ordinance with an humble, thankful heart; to remember and reverence our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only king and head of the church, and to enter a public protest against all rivals and usurpers of his authority and dominion. I renounce all other lords of my faith, and pay homage to him, as the divine and all-sufficient teacher; as my only Master and Lord I devote myself to him as his subject and servant, and ratify my fidelity to him, whom God hath exalted to be a prince and a saviour. I would endeavour to impress upon my mind a lively,

grateful idea of my privilege in being, with my fellow-Christians, joint members of Christ and subjects of his kingdom. I assemble with them to celebrate the victories which he hath won over sin, Satan, and death, and our happy deliverance from heathen ignorance and idolatry, and popish superstition and tyranny. I would think with tender compassion of those who are yet under the power of darkness. I would pity those who, while they are called Christians, groan under the tyrannical yoke of antichrist. I would pray that they who are led away by strong delusions to believe a lie, may be enlightened; that every oppressive yoke may be broken, and that the pure gospel of Jesus may spread its triumph over every pagan and popish nation. I would keep this feast with ardent gratitude for my civil and religious privileges. I esteem it reasonable, and have often found it pleasant and useful, to commemorate my deliverance from heathenish and popish idolatry and tyranny. Blessed be God that I am turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God! I would recollect and acknowledge these singular favours with peculiar gratitude at this ordinance. I would come to it rejoicing in Christ Jesus, who led captivity captive, triumphing over the powers of darkness; who reigns through all generations; will secure his church from the gates of hell, and save all his faithful subjects with an everlasting salvation. I would now declare myself of that number, and trust my eternal interests with him who is able to save to the uttermost.

AFTER PARTAKING.

As you have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and been giving a fresh evidence of your allegiance and subjection to him, suffer me to address you in those striking words of the apostle (1 Thess. ii. 12), "We exhort and charge every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," or unto his glorious kingdom. I entreat you, with a truly paternal tenderness, as one who hath a most affectionate concern for your welfare, that you attend to and comply with this most weighty exhortation. The duty enjoined is very plain, but infinitely important; that "ye walk worthy of God;" agreeably to his will and command; worthy of your knowledge of his holy nature, and of that religion which he hath established by Jesus Christ; worthy of the relation which you bear to him and his dear Son. Walk so that you may please and glorify him, and obtain his loving kindness, which is better than life. He hath "called you into his glorious kingdom," and given you the privilege and honour of being his subjects. Be careful to manifest that obedience and submission which is required of them; to accommodate your whole temper and conduct to the

leading design of the gospel, which is to make you wise and holy and happy. Thus will you secure a comfortable evidence of your title to that glory which he hath promised. You may justly consider your present feasting together at his table, as a real, though imperfect, specimen and foretaste of the entertainment of his heavenly kingdom, which you shall partake of in the society of all his saints under every dispensation. But remember the solemn charge which I give you; which St. Paul giveth you; which our divine master giveth you; and which God our Father giveth you, "to walk worthy of God." Often call to mind what you have been doing, to engage your daily and most serious attention to it. And may it have a happy influence, through divine grace, to make you more meet for an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

MEDITATION XLV.

2 Corinthians i. 3.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

There is no disposition of mind more proper and becoming, when we approach to God in the solemnities of his worship, than a grateful one. "To enter into his presence with thanksgiving and his gates with praise, to be thankful unto him, and bless his name," will be comfortable and edifying to our souls, and acceptable to him. But there is no religious service to which this grateful temper is more suitable, than the ordinance now before us; in which we are to recollect, commemorate, and celebrate the most important and valuable favours with which a sinful world was ever blessed. I hope we have now this disposition in our hearts, and that we can, with sincerity, seriousness, and pleasure, adopt these words of the apostle, with which, out of the fulness of a grateful and benevolent heart, he begins his letter to the Corinthians; "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." Here it is intimated to us that the great God is the author of all our mercies and comforts—and therefore we ought ardently to praise him. Let us dwell a little upon these thoughts.

God is "the Father of mercies;" that is, the original and donor of every mercy and blessing which we enjoy; which all his creatures in heaven and earth and in all worlds enjoy. When he is called "the Father of mercies," it may intimate the greatness, value, and multitude of the favours he bestows. He is likewise the "God of all comfort;" the Being who bestows

upon us and communicates to us, with a divine munificence, every comfort that we possess. More particularly, he is the author of all our temporal blessings, or the blessings which relate to our bodies and the present world. For he made and he governs the world. His providential care extends to all his creatures. He is good to all; good to us in particular, and giveth us all things richly to enjoy. Oh that this thought were more familiar to our minds, as it would add a relish to all our enjoyments, and promote devotion, faith, and an humble, cheerful confidence in God! Whatever favours and comforts we receive by means of our friends, or any of our fellow-creatures, he giveth them all their ability and inclination to be serviceable to us. More especially he is the author of all our spiritual comforts; those which relate to the soul, and particularly affect it. There is such a thing as spiritual distress. The distress of an awakened sinner; the distress of a backslider, and one that is conscious of some allowed sin, or of a great declension in religion. There is the distress of a serious, circumspect Christian, under darkness and dejection of spirit, bodily pains and infirmities, and worldly troubles and crosses. If we have known nothing, or but little, of any of these kinds of distress, God could soon make us know much of them. "If he hideth his face we are troubled." An imagination that we are out of the reach of them, and self-confidence, are the ready way to provoke him to hide his face. Under such distress God comforts; and none but he can do it effectually. If he giveth quietness, who or what can give trouble? He hath made provision, gracious, ample provision, for the comfort of his people. And that is, by the gospel of Christ; of him who is the consolation of Israel and our hope. The exceeding great and precious promises of the covenant of grace show that the consolations of God are not small. He sends down his Spirit as a comforter, and causeth the Christian to abound in peace and hope through his power. He comforts his servants by his ordinances. His ministers are appointed and directed to speak comfortably to his people. He brings to their view and to their hearts the consolations of the gospel. He makes them joyful in his house of prayer, and his worship yields them a thousand comforts. But the Spirit communicates these comforts to their souls, shows them their title to them, and giveth them a relish for their sweetness. Finally, he hath laid up for them goodness inexpressibly great, and consolations inconceivably delightful; a complete and everlasting salvation. I hope you know this to be the case. Yes (will the devout Christian say), I trust I am not quite a stranger to the comforts of God; yea, and even now tasting something of their sweetness and excellency. I would heartily bless God for them, I would be engaged to love him and trust in him, who is described by the inspired apostle in so amiable and endearing a

light. I would be careful never to lose these comforts, nor weaken my hopes and expectations, that they will be further communicated to me, as my case may require. For I know by experience that I shall find all other things miserable comforters. I come to this ordinance to commemorate the death of Christ, by which the covenant of God, so full of comfort, was attested and sealed. In him all the promises are yea and amen, fully and cheerfully to be depended upon by me. I come to testify my allegiance and subjection to Christ; as by that way alone I can expect divine mercy and all the comforts which I want. I come to testify and confirm my love to my fellow-Christians. This is to show itself, among other instances, by being "merciful as my heavenly Father is merciful," and by comforting and edifying one another. May I partake of this ordinance in such a manner as to give me increasing encouragement to expect mercy and comfort in every future scene of life and death, and even to eternal life!

AFTER PARTAKING.

When Job had uttered some passionate and complaining expressions, one of his friends asks him this pertinent question (Job xv. 11), "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" There are many circumstances in which we shall do well to put that question to our own hearts, after what we have now been doing. More particularly, are we tempted to do any thing which God forbids, or neglect what he requires? Let us ask, are the consolations of God small with thee? Shall I give up the peace of my mind, the comforts of religion, and all my hopes in God, for a fleshly gratification, an earthly interest? Are we tempted to comply with sinful, dangerous customs, and run with others into their vices and follies? Ask, are these consolations better than God's? Are the pleasures of sin equal to the pleasures of an approving conscience and a smiling God? Are we tempted to slacken our zeal, to abate the regularity and seriousness of our devotions, and to neglect the means of grace? Ask, are the consolations of God so small, that I should be willing to lose them? Can any thing be an equivalent for such a loss? Are we tempted to distrust Providence, to murmur and repine under afflictions and corrections. Inquire, are the consolations of God small? Can I doubt his ability and readiness to support and comfort me under them? May I not conclude, more strongly than ever, after what hath now passed that "as my tribulations abound, my consolations in Christ will much more abound?" Am I afraid of death, and on that account subject to bondage? Are there no consolations in the everlasting covenant for such a case? And are they small? Hath he not supported thousands of his servants at that season? Can he not support me, and will he not do it according to his promise? Take

courage then, O my soul, to trust these consolations. Maintain a constant composure and cheerfulness, and in every thing give thanks. Thus may I be strong in faith, and give glory to God!

MEDITATION XLVI.

EPHESIANS II. 19.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

THERE are no subjects more proper for our contemplation at the Lord's table, than the blessings to which we are raised by the gospel, and the glorious hopes which it sets before us. In consequence of the amazing plan of divine love, we have liberty of access, by one Spirit, to the Father. We are no longer "strangers and foreigners," as those who were proselyted to the Jewish religion from other nations had been, but we are "fellow-citizens with the saints, yea we are of the household of God;" his domestics, like the Jewish priests as distinguished from common Israelites. Here it is natural to observe, that all sincere Christians belong to God's family, they partake of the provision and blessings of it, and are obliged to observe the orders and perform the services of it.

I. *All sincere Christians belong to God's family.*

He is the Father of all creatures, as he formed and preserves them. But he is in a peculiar, appropriating sense the Father of all his holy creatures. The heathen were strangers and foreigners; but to as many as receive Christ and believe in him there is this privilege given, that they should be called "the sons of God." Angels and glorified saints are the children of God, and members of his family; for of him, as the apostle observes, "the whole family in heaven and in earth is named." Jesus Christ is the elder brother of this honourable house. He presides over it and governs it; and those who by faith are united to him, are united to the whole family of God.

II. *They partake of the provision and privileges of God's family.*

They share the blessings and comforts of his house and table. They enjoy the instructions of his word, the labours of his ministers, and the ordinances of his gospel. The bread of life is administered to them, and they partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit. These blessings are compared to bread, milk, wine, flesh, water; things necessary to the support, or conducive to the health and comfort of our bodies. Christians are admitted

to an unrestrained converse with God, as their Father. "Through Christ we have access by one Spirit to him." This ordinance is a sacred feast, which God makes for his children in their different apartments in his family; and he invites them all to partake of it. He designs thereby to promote their spiritual nourishment, to strengthen the divine life, and to advance the graces of the Christian character in their hearts. We may further remark,

III. *They are obliged to observe the orders, and perform the services of his family.*

For instance, to reverence, love, and obey their common Father; to receive every notice of his will with all humility and submission, and to obey it with all readiness and cheerfulness. They are obliged to wear the habit of his children; to be clothed with the robes of righteousness and humility, and to put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. We are commanded to reverence the Son of God, our dear and honoured elder brother, who in all things hath the preeminence; to receive the law at his mouth, and to seek and expect a supply of all our spiritual necessities through his hands, and in virtue of his intercession. We are required to be holy in all manner of conversation, to live soberly, righteously, and godly. The gospel contains the laws of this family. And it is the duty of all who are members of it, to walk in all its statutes and ordinances blameless. Further, Christians, as branches of this family, are under indispensable obligations to consult its honour and credit, to have its common interest at heart; to endeavour to increase the number of its members, and promote its regularity and peace. A necessary condition of their admittance into this family is, that they love one another, and consult each other's comfort and welfare. The angels, as parts of this family, should be the objects of our esteem, gratitude, and love. Their rank is so high, their characters so excellent, their benevolence so great, and their friendly services for us so many, that we should always think and speak very honourably of them. Our common relation to this family should be a bond of union among ourselves. "Let brotherly love continue," and be carefully cherished. Let peace and harmony and a community of interests prevail among us. Let not the different garb we wear, the different apartments in which we lodge or worship, alienate our affections from any of our fellow-Christians. Let us wish well and do good to all men, as we have opportunity, especially to them who are of the household of faith. Besides our common union to Christ, to angels, and saints, our hope of being for ever with one another, and with the Lord, should make this union more strict and pleasant, and lead us to serve one another in love. We assemble together at the Lord's table, as a part of God's family, to pay our homage to our common Father, and

testify our gratitude, love, and subjection to the gracious Redeemer. I would be habitually thankful for the privileges of God's household. I would carefully, and especially here, remember by what means I was introduced into this family; by the love of God, and the blood of Jesus, through which sinners are brought nigh, have access to God as their Father, and boldness to enter into the holiest of all. I would thankfully commemorate the grace of the gospel, rejoice in my relation to Christ and to my fellow-Christians, and always remember that relation as a motive to excite me to walk worthy of it.

AFTER PARTAKING.

Once more, as a part of God's family, we have not only partaken of the common provision of his house, but have been feasted at his table. I hope our hearts have been overflowing with gratitude to God and the Redeemer; and that we have been increasing our love to one another while we have been testifying our relation and affection to all our fellow-Christians. May we never dishonour God's family, displease its gracious head, or injure, grieve, or neglect any one who belongeth to it! Otherwise our sin will be greatly aggravated, and God will say to us as to Israel, "You only have I known," or you have I principally favoured of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for you iniquities. Let our thoughts be frequently and devoutly directed to God's house above; to that part of his family which dwells there. Let us be longing to remove thither, and to join "the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect." The grand scheme of the gospel terminates in this, to bring all his sons to glory, and put them in possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. May this glorious hope and prospect animate our hearts, and carry us firmly and cheerfully through every duty, every difficulty, every temptation; yea, through the valley of the shadow of death, for that is the road, the only road, to God's eternal house in the heavens. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ shall appear we shall also appear with him in glory."

MEDITATION XLVII.

JUDGES XIII. 23.

But Manoah's wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these.

THE service which is now before us, my fellow-Christians, leads us to commemorate the death of Christ, whom God hath made a sin-offering for us. He intended that this event should be considered as an evidence of his hatred of sin, and at the same time of his readiness to receive penitent sinners to mercy. It will be very suitable to this solemnity to show you that God's appointing and accepting the sacrifice of his Son is a proof and assurance that he is disposed and ready to forgive and accept all sincere penitents, all humble, pious souls. The words now before us will illustrate this thought, and furnish matter of devout meditation. Manoah's wife, the mother of Samson, had seen an angel who had promised her a son. When the promise was reported to Manoah, he received it with great respect for the messenger; and having provided an entertainment for him, the angel commands him to offer it to the Lord as a burnt-offering, and then he ascended in the flame thereof, and they saw him no more. Manoah immediately concluded that they should die, because they had seen God or an angel; according to the common notion which prevailed at that time. His wife argues in the words before us with much good sense and strong faith, that God's accepting their sacrifice was a proof that he was propitious to them, and that no evil would follow from what had passed. These words kept in view may guide our meditations on the most important discoveries of the gospel. And they naturally suggest to us,

I. *That as God hath accepted the sacrifice of Christ, he intends to show mercy to humble penitents.*

That the death of Christ is to be considered as a sacrifice for sin, is so plain from numberless passages in the scriptures that I need not set myself to prove it. Nothing is more evident than that he died not for his own sins. It was for our iniquities that he was smitten. It is evident that God accepted his sacrifice. This appears from the remarkable prodigies and wonderful signs which attended his death. But especially by God's raising him from the dead, setting him at his own right hand, and pouring down the Holy Spirit on his apostles. If God had been inexorable, if there had been no room to hope for mercy from our

offended sovereign, he would not have appointed and accepted the death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. The words may further suggest to us that,

II. *In order to confirm our faith in this important point, God hath shown us and told us many gracious things.*

His providential bounties to the wicked, his goodness to the evil and unjust, give us some hope of mercy. The reconcileableness of God to sinners was a principle supposed by the heathen, and the foundation of their prayers and oblations. And indeed it is scarcely conceivable how religion could have been supported without the belief of it. But we enjoy that glorious gospel which clearly discovers the tender mercy of God, and shows us in what way, and by whom, it is ensured to us, and how it may be obtained. We have a large account of the sacrifice and mediation of the Son of God. Manoah's wife argues from a promise given; we from a promise fulfilled, which is much stronger; yea, from a variety of exceeding great and precious promises, many of which have already been performed. At this ordinance God shows us many great and gracious things. It is a standing evidence of his readiness to be reconciled to all sincere penitents. We are called upon to commemorate that sacrifice which infinite wisdom and goodness appointed and accepted. The head of the church would never have instituted such a service as this unless the death, which is represented to us by it, had been sufficient to obtain and secure our pardon and salvation. We have reason at all times, especially at this table, to take it for granted as an evident principle of Christianity, that God is by Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and that he will reject no penitent soul who sincerely applies to him in the name of Jesus for pardon and salvation. Now, how should our hearts be affected with a truth so clearly discovered, so firmly established?

This proof of God's reconcileableness should promote in our hearts a fervent affection to him. Love to God is the life and spirit of all true religion and acceptable worship; the grand principle that leads and animates to every duty. The perfections of God (will the Christian say) render him amiable in my eyes; the most worthy object of my highest veneration and love. But is it not doubtful whether I could love God if I had any strong suspicion of his reconcileableness. The damned, who have no hope, cannot love God. The devils, who know more of his glories than we do, have a settled aversion to him and oppose his kingdom and interest. Perhaps it may be beyond the power of our degenerate nature to love real worth and excellency to the degree which it deserves without some view to its own advantage. But surely when I survey the mercy and grace of God manifested in Christ Jesus, I can want no motive to love him. I have every strong inducement to love him with all my

heart. The firmer foundation my hope hath, the greater ought my affection to be. And I earnestly desire that a repeated serious reflection on this favour my keep the sacred principle alive and active, and at the same time strengthen my hope. Again,

This proof of God's reconcileableness gives the highest encouragement sincerely to dedicate ourselves to his service. Thus the apostle argues; "Be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin." What can be more reasonable than that I should be the Lord's? Will he accept the surrender I make of myself to him; accept such a mean sinful creature, who can do him so little service? Yes, I may be assured he will accept me, for he hath already accepted the sacrifice of Christ for us. My sincere dedication of myself to God through the Redeemer, will as surely be accepted as the sacrifice of Christ was. If he had been pleased to reject such an oblation as I can present, and such service as I can perform, he would not have appointed and accepted the death of Christ as a ransom for me. I would view this encouragement with a most attentive mind. I would embrace it with gratitude and joy; and would devote my body and soul, my time, substance, abilities, and every talent I possess, to the service and glory of this gracious and condescending God.

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have again been reflecting on that most interesting truth, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses." We have seen a further confirmation of it in this ordinance, by which God shows the immutability of his counsel, and giveth his servants strong consolation. Let me now exhort you, in the language of the apostle, (Heb. xii. 15), to "look diligently, lest any fail of, (or, as the margin better renders it) fall from the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you." You see that it requires much circumspection and diligent care, that you do not fall from grace; that you do not, by presumptuous sins or any wilful neglect of duty, forfeit the favour of God, or lose any thing which you have gained. Watch over your own hearts, lest any root of bitterness spring up there which may "bear gall and wormwood," embitter all your comforts, and add to the weight of all your afflictions. Let no sensual affections, irregular desires, or malignant passions be harboured in your breasts. Watch over one another also in the spirit of love. Exhort one another daily, especially those with whom you are particularly connected. Be excited to this, lest there be any root of bitterness springing up in the family or church to which you belong. Such persons may defile, or have a bad influence upon those who know them and are in friendship with them. They may

grieve the hearts of many of God's children, and dishonour a Christian profession. The more sensible we are of the importance and necessity of divine grace, the more solicitous let us be that we improve it ourselves, and lead others to make that use and advantage of it which the God of all grace intended we should. And to him let us daily lift up our hearts, that he would, by his Spirit, point out to us the remaining imperfections of our characters, the remaining corruptions of our hearts, and excite us with the utmost zeal and resolution to correct them. And for our encouragement let us remember that they who are wise and good shall at length "shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn others to righteousness shall shine" with a superior lustre, "even as the stars for ever and ever."

MEDITATION XLVIII.

Zechariah ix. 17.

For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty.

There is no subject of contemplation more delightful to a serious mind than the goodness of the Lord. It employs the thoughts of his saints and angels, and tunes the songs of heaven itself. There is no place on earth where we have so much reason to contemplate and adore it as at the Lord's table. We have each cause to adopt the words of the prophet, and to say, with humble adoration and ardent praise, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty." We have reason to say it every day, when we behold the glories of the creation, and the whole earth full of the riches of the Lord; especially when we lie down and rise up, go out and come in, in peace, and are refreshed with the bounties of providence. We have reason to say it every sabbath, when we come to partake of, and be satisfied with, the fatness of his house, and to drink of the river of his pleasure. But we have peculiar reason to adopt this language at his table, where he causeth all his goodness to pass before us; proclaims himself "the Lord, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." The prophet had been, in the preceding verses, describing the appearance of Christ, as king of Zion; as just and having salvation. He had been speaking of the blood of the covenant, by which the prisoners of divine justice are delivered, and invited to turn to the strong hold. He had described the salvation which God should work out for his people by the Messiah, when they should be as the precious stones of a crown, lifted up on high, and God would save and favour them as his jewels and peculiar treasure. The prophet's heart was so affected with the prospect of this mercy,

that he breaks out into this joyful acclamation, "How great is his goodness!" This he intimates should be the subject and burden of their songs, under the New Testament dispensation. And we may learn from hence, that the divine goodness in our redemption and salvation claims our admiration and our praise. More particularly,

Here we see "the beauty of the Lord:" how amiably his perfections shine in the dispensation of the gospel; so that all who attend to it with serious minds will see and adore them. Here we observe mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace greeting each other. We see the holy God just in requiring an atonement to be made for sin, that he might display the righteousness and advance the honour of his government; and requiring repentance and faith in order to our partaking of the benefits of it. We see at the same time that he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. Here we see the king of Zion, the image of the invisible God, in all his beauty; and he appears fairer than the children of men, and altogether amiable and lovely. It is probable that angels never saw so much of God before. But "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is now made known, by what is done for the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Here also we see the goodness of the Lord; with what peculiar lustre this perfection of the divine nature shines in our redemption by Jesus Christ. Every thing which he did and suffered is the effect of divine goodness. All the gifts of God show his kindness, but his unspeakable gift displays it in the brightest manner. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might have everlasting life." With him and through him he giveth us the most important blessings. We have the strongest evidence of his reconcileableness, the assurance of pardon and peace to every penitent, and comfortable approach to his throne by the mediator. We are favoured with the assistances of his Spirit amidst the difficulties and temptations of life; with his consolations amidst all our sorrows, and his sacred influence to cement our hearts in love to one another. His goodness appears great if we consider how universally it extends; even to all mankind. For "Jesus is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." He commanded his gospel to be preached to every creature, in order to recover them from ignorance, guilt, and misery, and bring them to the favour and service of God, and to the privileges and hopes of his children. His goodness appears great, if we consider who are the objects of it: mean and miserable mortals, whose goodness cannot extend to him; creatures who had sinned, forfeited all claim to the divine favour; were unworthy of his common providential bounties, much more of those spiritual and eternal blessings which his gospel promiseth.

Let us consider how far this goodness extendeth; even through eternity. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son." This goodness is to terminate in perfect and everlasting glory and felicity. The fountain of all our comforts and hopes is divine goodness. The streams are plenteous and various. They enrich, delight, and satisfy the soul, and they flow for ever. This is goodness indeed. "Herein is love," unequalled, unparalleled love, "not that we loved God," or that our goodness could extend to him," "but he loved us," and as the strongest evidence, "gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

On this most important, interesting, delightful point, the goodness of the Lord, let our thoughts now be fixed. No subject of contemplation can be more proper at this ordinance. Shall we not each say, I am come to commemorate the death of my Redeemer, which commends, illustrates, and sets forth the love of God in the most beautiful colours and with every attractive charm? And I hope my heart is glowing with gratitude and love to my most bountiful and indulgent benefactor. His goodness hath provided this feast for me, though one of the unworthiest of his guests. The dignity, grace, and condescension of the great master of it, the suitableness and richness of the provision, and the unworthiness of the guests, all, I hope, concur to strike my mind with holy reverence and filial love, and engage me to say, "How great is his goodness!" I would partake of the bread and drink of the cup with such devout language, with the most fervent gratitude, and a sincere desire that I may be directed and assisted to "render unto the Lord according to the benefits I have received."

AFTER PARTAKING.

We have been this day beholding the beauty of the Lord, tasting that he is gracious, and have been satisfied with the fatness of his house. I hope our renewed experience and relish enable and dispose us to say, "How great is his goodness!" That the impression may remain, and produce its proper effects, let me recommend to your regard those awful words of the apostle (Rom. xi. 22), "Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." He had been describing the righteous severity of God in casting off the Jews for rejecting the gospel of Christ. But, saith he to Christians, behold the goodness of God towards thee. It is goodness that we partake of the privileges which they lost, and have a title to those spiritual blessings of which they are deprived. We and our children are grafted into the good olive, Christ; are united to him and derive support, nourishment, and comfort from him. Our duty is to continue

in his goodness; to be sensible of it and grateful for it; to be led to repentance by it; to walk worthy of our Christian profession and character; to observe the laws and commandments of our gracious sovereign. It is our duty to imitate his goodness, and "be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful." We rejoice in our privileges; but let us "rejoice with trembling." Let their inestimable value make us afraid of forfeiting them: otherwise we shall be cut off; if not from the church below, yet from the church in heaven, and have no share in its felicity. Our condemnation will be increased by all the goodness of which we are partakers. Perhaps the greatest aggravation of future misery will be this circumstance, that it is inflicted by the best of beings. When he who is rich in mercy, and not willing that any should perish; when he who delighteth in mercy, and calleth judgment his strange act; when he seeth it necessary to reject and punish, the punishment must be dreadful beyond all our thoughts. Let us attend then to the apostle's exhortation, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Christian humility, watchfulness, and prayer, will promote our steadiness and our progress in religion. "Wherefore also," to use the apostle's words, "we pray always for you, that our God would account you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"(2 Thess. i. 11, 12).

MEDITATION XLIX.

Matthew iii. 15.

And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

John the Baptist was baptizing the Jews in token of their repentance for sin, their expectations of the Messiah, and their readiness to receive him, who was to baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Christ himself came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized by John. The prophet forbad him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee," as one every way my superior, "and comest thou to me?" thou who art more holy and honourable than myself? But Jesus directed him to do it, and gives this reason for it, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil," or perform, "all righteousness." Christ came to be baptized, though he had no sins to confess or repent of, and all the ends of John's baptism could not be answered in and by him. But he was willing to countenance John's ministry, to testify his approbation of this institution, and recommend it to

others. He conformed himself to what he appointed for his disciples. He set them a pattern of obedience to the will of God, and laid down a general rule for all his followers, that they should "fulfil all righteousness." From whence we may observe, with relation to the Lord's supper in particular,

That it is a part of *righteousness to comply with positive institutions,* or those rites or sacraments which are peculiar to the Christian religion, and become our duty, only because they are enjoined us. God hath commanded them by his Son Jesus, who by sufficient evidence proved, that he was a teacher sent from God. And it is right and fit that he should be obeyed. He saw them to be proper and useful in themselves; therefore it is our duty to comply with them; even though we should have some doubt wherein the propriety and usefulness of them consist But I think no thoughtful, serious person can have any such doubt with relation to the service now before us. It is a proper form of maintaining a profession of Christ's religion, and testifying that we believe and embrace it. It adds a solemnity to our worship, helps our reflection and our faith, and strengthens our social affections. It is particularly serviceable, as it recalls to our minds the most important facts and principles of Christianity, and lays us under the strongest engagements to be holy. Though we could not clearly discern all those good ends answered by this service; yet the authority of Christ alone binds us to comply with it. For he that breaks or leaves undone one of the least of his commandments, and knowingly offends in one point, cannot be a righteous man.

Further, to comply with positive institutions is *a duty incumbent on all.* The wisest and best of men ought to fulfil all righteousness. Christ was baptized, though he needed it not. And if it could not be supposed that we did not want the help of this ordinance, yet duty to God and a regard to others would lead us to observe it. But indeed none are so established as to be above the need of it. And it is ignorance or pride that leads any to imagine that they need it not. Besides, they ought to do a public honour to all divine institutions, and to give all the force of their example to recommend to others obedience to them. The neglect of it in some will embolden others; and the young will plead the unjustifiable conduct of their elders, as an excuse for their own. To this let me add, that our Lord saith, "it becomes us," which word (as it is elsewhere rendered comely) not only signifies that it is our duty, but that there is a decency and beauty in it; that it is (if I may so express it) a branch of good manners, as well as religion; and a thing lovely and of good report, as well as right in itself. May it not be further observed, that Christ came from a distance to be baptized; from Galilee to Jordan; which shows that no difficulties and inconveniences should keep us from our duty. And it will afford us great satisfaction in the review, that we have obeyed divine institutions

with exactness and care, and willingly omitted no opportunity of showing forth the death of Christ.

Upon these principles, and with these views, I hope we are desirous to attend this ordinance. It was instituted for us. It is highly advantageous to us; and we are, through divine assistance, capable of answering all the ends of it. It is an ordinance which Christians in all ages have found greatly serviceable to them; and I hope our own experience concurs with theirs. While we fulfil this part of righteousness, it will raise our characters to greater excellency, and dispose and assist us to abound in all the fruits of holiness. We commemorate the sufferings of Christ, who bore our sins; that we being dead to sin might live to righteousness. We view his obedience to death, by which his own perfect righteousness was manifested, and the righteousness of his Father and his great love to mankind displayed in a most beautiful and happy union. For herein we see that "he is just, while he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." I hope therefore our language is, Lord, my Saviour fulfilled all righteousness, and left no part of duty undone. I am herein desirous to follow his example. It is my duty and my interest, my honour and my joy, to obey every divine command. And as I am approaching this table with that design, I earnestly desire and cheerfully hope that thou wilt meet me and bless me, accept my sacrifice of thanksgiving and increase in me all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to thy praise.

AFTER PARTAKING.

When Jesus was baptized and gone up from the water, we are told "the Spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And have we not peculiar reason to expect the common influences of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen our virtue, to assist us in our duty, to comfort our hearts, and witness with us that we are God's children, when we have been endeavouring to fulfil all righteousness? We need his influences to lead and keep us in the paths of righteousness; considering how prone we are to wander from them; how many strong temptations and bad examples we are surrounded with, and how often we have turned aside from the holy commandment, even since we have made a solemn dedication of ourselves to the service of God. Let us earnestly seek these influences, and cheerfully expect them. And let us reflect for our encouragement, that "if the Spirit of Christ be in us, the body is dead with respect to sin, so that it shall not have dominion over us; but the Spirit is life," vigorous and active, "because of righteousness:" yea it will be in us an earnest and assurance that we shall at length "behold God's face in righteousness, and be satisfied when we awake with his likeness."

MEDITATION L.

Luke xii. 32.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

To remove the doubts and lessen the fears of real Christians, is a very important but very difficult part of a minister's work. Many gracious words hath God spoken to his people, to dissipate their fears; and it is the business of ministers to apply those words to them and to comfort their hearts. With this view, let me now direct your thoughts to what our blessed Lord saith to encourage his timorous disciples: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

He commands his disciples "not to fear." This implies that they are liable to fear; ready to be filled with anxious cares and distressing apprehensions; to fear that they shall want the necessaries or comforts of life, or be overcome by enemies and temptations. Because his sheep are weak and few, their hearts are ready to meditate terror. But such fears are displeasing to their master and owner, injurious to themselves, and dishonourable to his religion. He expects and demands that they endeavour to conquer them; and he gives them very substantial reasons why they should not fear. For instance,

1. He calls them "his flock." As far as they are renewed by divine grace, they are like sheep, innocent, gentle, useful creatures. They are Christ's sheep; his property and charge; given him by the Father, as the purchase of his blood and the reward of his sufferings. They solemnly choose him for their shepherd, and commit themselves to his care. And will such a shepherd, one so wise and powerful, so faithful and kind, see his flock destroyed? Had we been with him on earth, should we not have thought ourselves secure under his eye and protection? Should we not have courageously followed him, though he had led us through the wilderness or the sea? And are not his power and grace still the same? Though they are but "a little flock," he doth not overlook them; no, not one of them, the weakest and meanest. He doth not think one of them below his notice and care. He guards and he feeds them; feeds them not for the slaughter, but for eternal life. For he came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

2. Further, he intimates to them that "God was their Father." And is he not our Father also, if we are Christ's sheep? Will so wise, powerful, and kind a father see his children destroyed? Will he suffer them to perish for want, and die unassisted and unpitied? No, it is impossible.

3. He informs them that there is "a kingdom" intended for them. And what are all the kingdoms of the world, compared

with it? Where are the ancient, mighty empires, which make such a figure in history? They are gone, and the places where their capital cities stood can scarcely be traced. For how short a time will any of the present kings of the earth possess their thrones and power? And while they do possess them, what cares and vexations attend the possession? What wretched slaves are most of them to their own lusts? And it is to be feared that few of them pay any more regard to religion than suits their political views. But the kingdom which the Christian shall possess is an everlasting kingdom. He shall have rule over every lust and every enemy. He shall rule under God and for him, and have nothing to interrupt his peace, or hazard his everlasting joy. Finally,

4. Our Lord suggests that it is "our Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom." He provided it for them, though mean and sinful worms. His grace giveth them a title to it, and will bring them to the full possession of it. Yea, as the words intimate, he taketh pleasure in the thought of giving it to them. He will bestow it with satisfaction and complacency, and "rejoice over them to do them good, with all his heart and all his soul."

Let us dwell on these thoughts at this ordinance. Here we commemorate the blood which purchased the flock of God, and the love which prepares a kingdom for it. Let us most thankfully acknowledge the kindness of our heavenly Father. Let our spirits rejoice in Christ our Shepherd and our Saviour. And having received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may now, and at all times, serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

I charge thee, O my soul, in the presence of God, and at this sacred ordinance, that thou live as the heir of such an inheritance. Let a respect to the recompence of reward raise thee above all the allurements of sin, above too strong an attachment to the concerns of flesh and sense, and above all thy anxieties, suspicions, and fears. Never immoderately grieve, or even be uneasy, if thou meetest with losses and disappointments. Is the kingdom provided for thee so mean and inconsiderable, that thou shouldst be cast down and almost ready to quarrel with Providence, because thou hast not such earthly blessings as thou couldst wish? Shall an heir of immortal glory distress himself with fear of this or the other evil which may never happen, or may not be so grievous as he apprehended? Mayest thou not expect such supports from thy Father as shall make thy afflictions comforts rather than crosses; and such improvement in religion by them as shall make thee thankful for them all thy days? Ought I not to be easy without a large share of earthly comforts when I have such glory in reversion? "Cast all thy care upon him, for he careth for thee." Thou canst not say he doth not *care* for thee,

when he hath provided thee a kingdom. I should and will leave him to judge how far, and in what manner, my present wants and desires shall be gratified. Shall I exceed in my love to any earthly blessings which I enjoy, when I have such better objects to engage my regard and affection? Hath God promised me a kingdom, and given me such assurance of possessing it, and shall I not willingly part with whatever he remands and takes from me? If he takes away my substance, my health, my friends, I shall not lose my *all*. My Father liveth, my inheritance is safe. And nothing can separate me from the love of Christ, and the blessed and everlasting effects of it. Shall I not be willing to leave all worldly blessings and go to possess this kingdom? Though death strips me of my possessions, my friends, my body, my earthly all, it will transport me to my best, my eternal inheritance; to the immediate presence and enjoyment of my Father and Saviour, and to the society of all my dear brethren and friends who are gone before me. I am going to his table to pay my homage to my heavenly Father; to remember and celebrate the dying love of my Redeemer, who hath purchased this inheritance for me, and to renew the dedication of myself to his service. And may I have that spirit of love, hope, and joy, which is so well suited to the nature and design of that ordinance!

AFTER PARTAKING.

It is said of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, that when Eli had given her assurance of the divine favour and help, "She went away and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Sam. i. 13). Methinks this ordinance should have the like effect upon us; to clear our countenances of every thing gloomy and anxious, and fill our hearts with courage, hope, and joy. The righteous ought to be bold as a lion, and say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of what should I be afraid?" Let us keep a resolute guard upon our hearts, and never give way to a dejected, timorous disposition. Let us pray that God would take from us the spirit of fear, and give us the spirit of love and of a sound mind. Let us remember Jesus, our Shepherd, and trust his power and grace. Let us follow where he leads, though the path be most gloomy and thorny, and he will conduct us to his heavenly kingdom. There shall we see the dear Shepherd of our souls eye to eye, and render him ardent and everlasting praise for all the tender care which he hath taken of us, and of all the rest of his little flock. In the mean time, blessed be God for all the words of peace and hope which he speaketh to his feeble servants, and that his precious promises are all sealed and confirmed to us by the death of Christ, which we have now been commemorating!

A SUMMARY

OF

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION,

BY WAY OF QUESTION AND ANSWER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, SHOWING THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGE OF A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

Children should be early led into this important truth, viz. That the chief business of religion is practice rather than notion, and this will have a happy effect upon their future opinions and conduct; whereas if their early catechisms are too much taken up in speculative points and controversial matters, they will imagine that religion is a business of notion, controversy, and dispute, and that it has not so much to do about the government of their hearts and lives.—WATTS's CATECHISM, sect. viii.

PREFACE.

This summary, in the form in which it first appeared in the world, was compiled by one of the most judicious, pious, and laborious ministers of this age. He had carefully studied human nature, and the dispositions and temptations of youth, and took indefatigable pains in their instruction both in public and private. Three editions of this work were sold off in that form. When I had led the children under my ministerial care through Dr. Watts's Catechisms, I wanted some larger, fuller system of religious truths, and especially of religious duties, to put into their hands, as they advanced in years and were capable of bearing "stronger meat." Finding no catechism so suitable to my purpose as this summary, yet not being entirely satisfied with every thing in it, I ventured to ask the author's consent to re-publish it, with such alterations as I should judge proper. This he very readily granted; such was his condescension to a younger brother, and such his desire to have religious knowledge and goodness diffused into young souls. Having therefore purchased the copy of the bookseller to whom it belonged, I reprinted the work with some alterations and additions, and lectured some portions of it to my young hearers in public, on Lord's day evenings, for several successive years, as long as my health would permit. I am persuaded that, through the divine blessing, which I would most thankfully acknowledge, this exercise was accompanied with some good effect to them, and I hope also to the numerous auditory that usually attended it. As that edition hath been long sold and another wanted, I have revised the work as carefully as I could, and made some more alterations in it, which indeed had been made before had not my great esteem and respect for the author, then living, led me to decline it. I have examined the texts with all the attention I could, and changed many, as they stood in the former editions, for some that appeared to me more apposite and striking; and I have now procured this work to be printed in a neater form than it hath ever yet appeared in. With all deference to the judgment of my brethren in the ministry, I would beg leave earnestly to recommend this Summary to them. I beseech them,

in the bowels of our common Lord, that they "feed his lambs," and do not neglect this most important and necessary branch of pastoral duty, viz. catechizing and instructing children and youth; as it was never more needed, yet, I fear, never more neglected. I would humbly entreat them to perform this service in public, on a Lord's day evening or some part of that day, as best suits their own and their people's conveniency; and this I do from my own experience of the pleasure and profit of such a service to a minister himself, notwithstanding its great difficulty, and the advantages of it to all who attend. Young persons who do not enjoy such opportunities of instruction, may reap great benefit from the serious frequent perusal of this Summary; as it contains the substance of many treatises and sermons of our best practical writers. It may also be useful to heads of families, even those who are wise and experienced; by suggesting to them proper subjects on which to meditate for their own instruction and improvement, and to converse with their children and servants; and may furnish them with proper advices and motives to regulate their own conduct, and to address to and urge upon those under their care. I think it may be useful to young ministers as a pocket companion, or a kind of common-place book of practical divinity; especially if they would get it interleaved, and add their own reflections and improvements to it. It may furnish them with some proper and useful plans for their public discourses, and may assist those who use free prayer to conduct that service with greater ease, regularity, and variety. I particularly desire those of my friends who attended my catechetical lectures upon it, that they would make it still familiar to them; and since many of them are now at the head of families, would convey to, and impress upon them, these salutary lessons and admonitions. I have only to add my fervent wish and prayer, that this work may be further blessed, by the great Head of the church, to promote the interest of real religion, and especially to form young persons to true wisdom, serious piety, and every branch of a worthy and honourable conduct. Amen.

J. O.

Kidderminster, September 15, 1771.

A SUMMARY

OF

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION.

INTRODUCTION.

SHOWING THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGE OF A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

Archbishop Tillotson says, he thinks it a true observation, "That catechizing, and the history of the martyrs, have been the two main pillars of the protestant religion."*

The weight of this observation is sufficient to encourage catechetical labours amongst protestant ministers, who desire the security of that religion which is the glory and perfection of man, and would, if universally received, be the happiness of the world.

For my own part, I have long considered the youth in our Christian assemblies, as the principal object of a minister's regard; a large share of my endeavours have been employed in their service; and I hope God has not denied his blessing to them.

The art of education is one of the most important, and yet one of the most difficult arts in the world. It is the art of forming and fashioning the mind; by rectifying the judgment, correcting or improving the temper, governing the passions, and directing the behaviour of youth, in order to raise them above every vicious and mean thought, sentiment, and action; that they may think and act suitably to the dignity of the rational nature, and to the noble ends of Christianity.

No wonder so many unformed and misshapen youth appear in the world, without thought, judgment, temper, and conduct; filled with error and vanity; devoted to vice and folly; governed by imagination and unreasonable passion; when so few parents have learned, or attempted to learn, the great and useful art of education; so useful, that a child well educated is much more obliged to its master than to its father.

I distinguish masters from fathers, where there ought to be a much less distinction than there usually is; but the distinction will take place (even among people of rank in the world) so

* Vol. i. p. 499, Sermon of Education.

long as fathers think more seriously about their sons' and daughters' externals, than their internals; their fortune, than their religion and virtue; and while they themselves labour for portions and settlements, commit their education wholly to others.

There are few persons of sense but they desire to see the minds of their children cultivated with knowledge and virtue; and sometimes have it more at heart to procure knowledge for their children, than to obtain it for themselves. Whence can this arise, but from this secret principle, that the understanding and virtue of their children will do them honour, without putting them to any pains and self-denial, or laying any restraints upon their own passions?

But among parents who take some care of mental improvements, how many are more solicitous about the knowledge which qualifieth their children for trade, company, and the business of fortune, than about that sacred wisdom and those Christian tempers which are the best ornament and the true perfection of the human mind, the object of delight and love, the principle of usefulness, and the only source of happiness.

It is far from my design to disparage any laudable and useful art; but I would most strongly recommend, what every man must approve, the art of training up youth in the maxims of religion; in the love of Christian virtue; in a course of life which will render them blessings upon earth, fit them for leaving this world, and render them acceptable in a better.

To render this work more easy and delightful both to parents and their children, I publish this Summary, as a plain system of religion for youth to converse with, clear of subtlety and disputable opinions, and drawn up in a method that a sensible, attentive parent or master may manage with moderate application.

I would hope a few arguments will convince Christian fathers and masters of the necessity of hearty application to this work; and that a little persuasion will engage them in it.

That a principal care is due to youth, from some hand or other, will easily be allowed; they need teaching, and are capable of improvement; they are susceptible of strong impressions, either virtuous or vicious; the whole interest of religion, and the world's welfare, has a dependence upon their future conduct.

That this care is primarily due from parents, is equally obvious, from a consideration of the near relation they stand in to their children; which carrieth in it obligations to duty. They are trustees for them, and guardians over them, appointed by God, the parent of the universe, in his natural providence. Parents have the best opportunities for executing the offices of education. And from whom can children claim it, if parents neglect it, and

disown their claim? Agreeably to this order and settlement of things, the great God, in his word, doth, in the most solemn manner, charge upon parents this work.

Let me then recommend it to you, Christian parents, and press it upon you, to attend to this great care; to learn and practice this great art, the art of religious education. Consider,

1. That the whole cause of religion must stand or fall, as youth are well or ill educated; though their influence while young and single may not be great; yet when advanced to be heads over families, to preside over religious assemblies, to rule over cities, their influence grows great, either to promote or pull down the building of religion in the world.

The next generation will consist of the children planted in this; if they are neglected, or ill taught, religion will die in the next age; if they are cultivated and well seasoned, they will diffuse a spirit of piety through every little region round them, and sow the seeds of virtue in the youth of the next age. Consider,

2. How much the welfare of your country depends upon this care. If religion, justice, truth, uprightness fail, the very foundations of a land are overthrown and go out of course.

Who would choose, or even care, to live in a country where a spirit of tyranny reigned in rulers; a spirit of discontent and rebellion in people; where compassion hath forsaken the rich; and industry is abandoned by the poor; where truth and equity find no place in trade; where every brother will supplant, and where a sober, regular, well ordered town is not to be found; and few or no families where piety, modesty, and peace reign!

If this ever become the state of our country, it will be time for every good man to flee out of it. It cannot stand long; sin will sink it, and judgments cannot be far off. Prevailing impiety and debauchery is the worst plague, nor can any thing expel or prevent it, but the religious education of youth. Consider,

3. How much the well being of families, and of all lesser societies, depends upon education.

What wretched husbands, wives, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, what worthless, unmanageable servants, must children make, who are brought up strangers to religion; who are taught the maxims of bodily labour only; who are inspired with no opinion but of the worth of riches, and with no love except of trifles; who are void of every good principle, and without one virtuous habit; who never learned the art of denying their appetites, governing their tongues, and suppressing irrational passions; who are destitute of the noble and public affections of sympathy, pity, charity, friendship; who are taught only to idolize themselves, and to seek nothing in earnest but a private and personal interest!

What can such children be good for in any station of life!

How insignificantly will they stand, or how mischievously will they act, in every relation! What wise family will ever come into alliance with them! Consider,

4. How surely you lay the foundation of your children's ruin, and what certain bars you lay in the way of their true happiness; if you neglect instruction, and leading them into such religious principles and tempers as are the only source of happiness; if you suffer them to imbibe, or dictate to them, those selfish principles and sensual tempers which will work their ruin.

Narrowness of spirit, sensuality, a passion for bodily things, ignorance, ill-tempers, ruin the health and happiness of the soul as effectually as diseases do that of the body.

Religion, wisdom, good principles, friendly tempers, are the only health and soundness of the mind; without which all the wealth you can scrape together for them, all the finery you can clothe them with, and all the business you can enter them into, will not keep them from being miserable. Once more, consider,

5. How much your own peace and happiness, or remorse and misery, depend upon your executing or betraying this your trust, the religious education of your children.

What satisfaction can you have in seeing them finely dressed, decently or nobly lodged, shining in equipage and grandeur, matched to estates and large revenues; while they themselves are foolish, blind, and dead, strangers to the God who made them, enemies to religion, miserably hoarding, or wantonly and wickedly mispending wealth; without wisdom to worship God, to use their riches, to fill up their stations; without any principles, habits, tempers, works, but such as they would willingly, yet cannot possibly, part with and shake off at death?

Then how will you come off in the other world, and in the judgment of the great day, if you, their parents, have inspired or nourished their worldly and vicious tempers? If you have taught them to place their happiness in luxury, state, and trifles; if you have taught them no maxims, recommended no tempers, advised them to no works, that they will wish to carry with them into eternity!

Ah, poor, unhappy son, or daughter! Thou art married rich enough, hast wealth enough, attendance enough, outward finery enough; but now, I see it too late, and it pierceth my heart; I see thou wantest the main matter, the only treasure worth having and worth keeping. I see thee dying and going off in a state I would not be found in for a thousand worlds!

Ah parents! when will you be wise, and seek for your sons and daughters a portion that none can take from them, a portion that will not be lost by death?

As to the method of education, great judgment is requisite; more than most fathers and masters acquire; but do your best, and still be trying to do better.

You had perhaps no education yourselves (the lot of almost all the meaner sort), and therefore know not how to give it your children. But now you see the importance and necessity of it, and the obligations you are under to this service, set yourselves to it, employ faithful industry, procure the best help you are able, and earnestly pray for divine direction and blessing. To this end,

Attend principally to the great truths of religion. Religion will inspire your own and their breasts with the noblest tendencies, and the highest aims. Assist your sons and daughters to entertain a great and awful, yet a lovely idea of God, that they may love to think on him, and love to pray to him.

Frequently represent to them the incomprehensible, matchless grace of Jesus Christ as a proper inducement to become his disciples and to imbibe his spirit.

Then acquaint them with providence, with what wisdom, steadiness, justice, and kindness, God governs the world; though many of his ways are fitly a secret to us. This will engage their trust in God, and promote in them a constant tranquillity and cheerfulness under all events, and in the darkest hours.

Represent a future judgment as very awful, yet very desirable, and not to be feared by good men. Lay before them the strong proofs which make it appear certain.

Show them the reasonableness of the Christian laws; and by the excellent doctrine of Jesus Christ, direct and assist them to form their judgments, to subdue their passions, to regulate their desires, to correct or improve their tempers; and try, by the wisest descriptions of virtue and vice, with all their attendants and consequences, to implant in them all the principles of practical religion, and the habits of goodness.

The doctrines and precepts of Jesus Christ are the salt with which you are to season their young hearts.

Let not the Father of spirits, the Redeemer and Sanctifier of souls, be grieved with beholding these precious vessels, the minds of your children, filled wholly with worldly ideas, with vanity and trash, who are so capable of noble improvements and divine relishes.

Let your children know that religion is a nobler thing than dry opinions and a fruitless faith; that it lieth in the image of God on the soul, a likeness to God and Jesus Christ, in justice, kindness, and charity; that it consisteth in heavenly dispositions, devout affections, in rectitude of spirit, purity of soul, and universal goodness.

Then make to your children a clear distinction between the outward or instrumental, and the real, inward, or moral and practical part of religion; teach them to value the latter above the former, and to value the former for the sake of the latter, as the means are valuable for the sake of the end.

How solicitous have I seen some parents to teach their children forms of prayer before they knew any thing of God, or could well speak; and at the same time indulging them in every foolish temper, and gratifying every craving appetite which it is one design of prayer to curb, rectify, and subdue.

Nay, have I not seen some parents chiding, and even forcing, their children to say their prayers? as if saying prayers was praying, though without either understanding or seriousness; as if praying through the influence of their authority only would be an acceptable sacrifice to God; as if any part of religion could be forced service without will and choice; as if they were resolved to lead them into the road of dead external formality in religion. And yet the same parents perhaps employ little or no pains to establish in the minds of their children just notions of God, the principles of righteousness and kindness, the laws of truth, candour, mildness, and peace; are under no concern to kindle in their hearts a love to holiness, to raise in them desires after wisdom; though these are the greatest of all goods, the only possession that can be called theirs, and the only solid and unchangeable fund of serenity, pleasure, and joy.

There are considerable errors in the method of education, that parents take more pains to teach their children the doctrines than the duties of religion, though the doctrines are revealed for the sake of the duties; that they are more careful to instruct them in the abstruse and darker, than in the plain doctrines of Christianity, though these are always the most important; that they too much neglect duties to men, and those inward virtuous tempers which are the spring of these duties, though duties to men are as strongly insisted on in scripture as duties to God; that they insist too little on the general truths of religion, the being, perfections, and providence of God, the evidences of Christianity, the authority of the scriptures, the immortality of the soul, a future judgment; and insist more on particular truths before their children are well established in these general ones; that the historical part of the Bible is too much neglected in education, though it is the easiest to be understood and remembered, the pleasantest, and perhaps the most instructive.

The great facts recorded in the Old and New Testament are a strong proof of a providence; they support the authority of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles; they carry in them lively images of virtue and vice; and of happiness and misery attending on them; and afford the most delightful and most profitable lessons to young people.

The naming only these errors in the method of education is, I hope, enough to wise and thinking parents, without insisting further on them.

As to the manner of education, wisdom and art are highly requisite to secure success. As it is not easy wholly to separate

method and manner, some observations already made may be reduced to this head.

It is of importance, that parents establish their authority early, and determine to be obeyed; but then they ought in all cases, as soon as their children are capable of it, to convince them that they have reason to be obeyed. They ought to gain an ascendency over children, not purely on the score of bodily height, or of age, or by the dint of threatening tones, and assuming airs; much less by cruel and brutal usage; but by discovering a superior wisdom and a tender love; by an equal disposition of mind, moderate, calm, and firm; a mind always master of itself, which is always guided by reason, never by passion and fancy; such as will secure reverence and respect in children, and show them the reasonableness of obedience.

I may add, that though parents and tutors should possess and discover a superiority of understanding, yet they should not affect to show it; much less manifest any contempt of children and scholars; which must needs give them an aversion to the teachers, if not to the things taught. It is certain children are much more easily and effectually taught by way of conference and reasoning than by that of authority.

Then it is of great consequence in education to show children the reasonableness, the beauty, the usefulness of every duty which the gospel recommends; and how sure and infallible a way to happiness Christian piety and duty is. This I have had in view in the following work.

Show them religion, which relates principally to eternity, to be so august and so good, that its very name may gain respect and engage their pursuit. Show them how essential to Christianity, how necessary to the welfare of the world, how worthy of mankind, mutual forbearance, love, candour, and charity are.

Is it not a melancholy, a dreadful consideration, that the Christian religion (the most lovely, most beneficent, most glorious institution) which was designed to revive piety and virtue in the world, to draw men off a dependence upon the senses, to elevate the mind to eternal things, to transform the soul into God's image, and to purify the heart from every corrupt temper and selfish passion, that this religion should be employed to subject men to externals, to trifles, to amusements, to opinions, notions, sets of words? This hath made them lose sight of that devotion which consists in forming just ideas of the wisdom and goodness of God, and in a conformity of heart to the Father of spirits; who exacts nothing from men but a solid, rational piety; which, in preparing them for the happiness of the world to come, makes at the same time their greatest happiness in this.

But in order to render instruction successful, to demonstrate to children the excellency of religion, and to strengthen good beginnings in the heart, it is of the utmost necessity that ex-

amples of goodness be statedly placed before their eyes. Let them see in the tempers, language, and actions of their parents, no images of vice, nothing that savours of a worldly spirit, or that is likely to make impressions upon them unfavourable to religion. Let them see by the moderation of your spirits, by the evenness of your tempers, by the good order of your houses, by your reverent and decent management of religious exercises, by the dear friendship subsisting between their parents, by your readiness to do good to all, by your just, kind, and peaceful behaviour, by your patience under temporal losses and disappointments; that religion has entered and conquered your hearts; that you believe its truth, are sensible of its worth, and live under its influence and power.

The importance of education hath led me into these enlargements; but the subject is too copious even to touch upon all the great and delicate parts of it. I hope parents and masters, to whom I chiefly address myself, will attend to the duty of their province, and spend their leisure evenings, and especially the vacant hours of the Lord's day, in the labours of education. And when they find God prospering their labours, and their children and servants improving in wisdom and virtue, this may be more their pleasure than the flourishing of the finest garden or plantation under their eyes; as young souls are of infinitely more worth than flowers and trees; and they will then count an evening hour spent in conversing with their families as well employed as with their companions in a tavern.

For God's sake, Christian tradesmen, look on your families as your chief nurseries, and on children and youth as your finest plants; and see that their minds be cultivated with the principles of religion, and dispositions to holiness; that you may show them to your friends and to the world with satisfaction; and give a good account of them to God in judgment.

This volume I offer for your assistance, to make one great branch of education easy and pleasant both to you and your families. It will not be a hard task, I hope it will be a pleasurable one, for your children and servants to prepare a small portion of this work, to be examined every Lord's-day, noon, or evening, or at other convenient seasons. The method of examining is not difficult to a master or mistress of moderate ability and attention, and who takes a little pains to review and to comprehend the lecture before they begin: though some have a faculty beyond others of making every thing in religion familiar and delightful to children.

As to this system of doctrinal and practical religion, in part first I have given a general account of religion, as distinguished into natural and revealed, or as revealed by the works and word of God; to which are added a short defence of the Christian revelation, and a summary of its chief doctrines.

In Parts II. III. and IV. I have made the scheme of duties as clear and perfect as I was able. I have not been uniform in the method under each branch, as I thought a variety more useful and refreshing.

In the definitions of the several Christian virtues, I have endeavoured after some exactness; since clear and distinct ideas are the foundation of all true and useful knowledge.

The contents of the fifth part will, I hope, be thought worthy the study and attention of the highest class of Christians, who desire to become perfect in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine of Repentance stands, I think, as properly by itself, in Part VI., as if it had been drawn in under any head of duty; as it belongs chiefly to bad men as preparatory to the kingdom of God, yet partly to good men; and as it is to be expressed in acts towards both God and man.

The seventh part, concerning Rewards and Punishments, gives the fairest occasion and the largest room for oratory and persuasion, or the pathetic art; and nothing affords more and better topics for eloquence, persuasion, and addresses to the passions of young people, than the Christian scheme. After parents, masters, and ministers have convinced the judgment, they ought to exert all their talents in recommending piety and virtue, and in dissuading from sin and vice, by the motives of the gospel, life and death, heaven and hell, happiness and misery, the favour and displeasure of God, the compassion and example of the Son of God. This I have briefly attempted in the last part.

I have added to almost every answer a text or two of scripture, quoted concisely for the sake of brevity, which I hope, especially if the context be examined, will appear very pertinent. I intend hereby to support and enforce the sentiments or directions contained in the answers, to lead both instructors and young people to a greater acquaintance with their bibles, and to show them what an excellent and complete system of duty and morality is contained in the word of God.

No doubt, Christian tutors, but God will accompany your wise and faithful labours with the influence of his good Spirit; who is always willing to conquer hearts, and is waiting for opportunities to build up God's ruined temples.

I shall conclude this Introduction with addressing myself to those persons for whose use this summary is chiefly intended.

My young friends,—Such is my real and deep concern for your happiness, that I would not neglect any means or seasons whereby I can promote it. In order to lead you into an acquaintance with the best and greatest things, the knowledge of which may do you good for ever, I would have you consider,

1. That some truths in religion are necessary to be understood,

in order to your being Christians, or to your eternal salvation.

2. That more truths are necessary to be learned, in order to your becoming wise and flourishing Christians, or to your greater comfort, excellency, and usefulness upon earth, and to your having greater rewards in heaven.

3. God would have all men grow wiser and better every day, that they may become more like to him their Father in heaven, and be capable of more blessedness in and with him.

That you may make a proper improvement of this and every other method of religious instruction, I would have you attend to the following advices.

1. Be sensible of your ignorance, and desirous to learn; and to that end be attentive and considerate. A desire to be wise is the first step towards becoming wise. "Be not wise in your own conceits." "My son, incline thine ear to wisdom, apply thine heart to understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing; get wisdom," Prov. ii. 2, iv. 7.

2. Keep your minds open to conviction, and, as much as possible, free from prejudice. Delight in examining into truth and right, take pleasure in seeing it, and be ready to embrace it and follow its conduct. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," Prov. xxiii. 23.

3. As the holy scriptures are the only perfect rule of faith and manners, have a high esteem for them. Examine every thing by them. "Search the scriptures." The Bereans are applauded, that "they searched the scriptures daily" concerning those things the apostles preached, Acts xvii. 11.

4. Labour to gain dominion over your appetites and passions. "Whoredom and wine take away the heart," unfit it for receiving knowledge. You must "flee youthful lusts," or you will never heartily "pursue righteousness, and practise faithfulness and charity," 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 22.

5. Pray daily to the Father of light and wisdom for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that you may grow in knowledge and piety, and that his blessing may attend the endeavours of your parents and instructors. "For the Lord giveth wisdom," Prov. ii. 6.

If you are disposed to follow these advices, we may proceed in this work with pleasure and hope of success. And while God hath the glory of your improving knowledge and goodness, your parents and ministers will reap the greatest comfort from it. "A wise son maketh a glad father; my son, if thou be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine," Prov. xxiii. 15.

PART I.

A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION, A SHORT DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND A SUMMARY OF ITS CHIEF DOCTRINES.

SECTION I.

Q. WHAT is religion?

A. Religion is such a habit of reverence and love towards God, as inclineth us to worship and serve him according to his will.

Q. What principally distinguishes men from brutes?

A. Religion, or a capacity for it.

Q. Have brutes any idea of God?

A. No.

Q. Or any sense of moral good and evil?

A. No.

Q. Or any expectation of a future state?

A. No.

Q. Had men better have been brutes, than live without religion?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the advantages of religion?

A. It sanctifies us; makes us acceptable to God, and useful in the world; it giveth us the best pleasures, and qualifieth us for endless happiness.

Q. What is sanctity or holiness?

A. A conformity to the nature and will of God; or the approbation, choice, and practice of what is morally good.

Q. How is religion usually divided?*

A. Into natural and revealed.

Q. What is natural religion?

A. Such a knowledge of God and our duty, as reason, unassisted by revelation, can attain.

Q. What is reason?

A. The faculty or power by which we apprehend, compare, and judge of things natural and moral.

SECTION II.

Q. WHAT is revealed religion?

A. Such histories, doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings, as are delivered in the holy scriptures, particularly in the New Testament.

Q. Is it not possible that false doctrines and corrupt opinions in religion may prevail in the world?

A. Yes.

* This has been called Objective religion, as it subsists in books, &c. Subjective religion is that which subsists in the mind, as when we call a man religious.

Q. By what methods?

A. 1. By arms and violence.

2. By art and cunning amongst the ignorant and credulous.

3. By flattering men's sensual inclinations and passions.

4. By their being fitted to promote a worldly interest.

Q. What religions have obtained by these methods?

A. The religions of Mahomet and of the pope.

Q. Of what religions do the holy scriptures give us an account?

A. The Jewish and the Christian.

Q. Why do you believe the Jewish religion to be from God?

A. 1. Because it was confirmed by numerous incontestable miracles.

Q. Which are the chief of those miracles?

A. The dividing the Red sea and Jordan, for the passage of the Israelites; feeding them with manna from heaven; guiding them through the wilderness by the cloud and pillar of fire; besides many others of the like nature recorded in the scriptures.

Q. What reason have we to believe the truth of these accounts?

A. They were universally believed by the Israelites from the times in which they are said to have been performed; solemn acts of religion were performed in commemoration of them from the beginning, and the Israelites submitted to the burdensome precepts of the law of Moses from a belief of them.

Q. But might not the Israelites be mistaken in this belief?

A. No. For the miracles were of a public nature, wrought in the presence of the whole nation, and some of them, as the manna and pillar of fire, continued forty years, so that they could not deceive themselves, nor be deceived by others.

Q. Have we any other evidence of the truth of the Jewish religion?

A. 2. The accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament in things which none but God could foresee.

3. The punishments of Israel for their disobedience to God, according to his threatenings; especially their dispersion through all nations, even to this day, agreeable to his predictions concerning them.

Q. What was the end of the Jewish religion?

A. To preserve the knowledge of God in the world, and prepare the way for the Christian.

Q. Why do you believe that the Christian revelation is from God?

A. I. There certainly was in the world such a person as Jesus Christ, the author of this religion.

II. He was eminently qualified for his work; a person of excellent wisdom, unquestionable integrity, and an unblameable conduct.

III. His doctrines and precepts are, in all respects, worthy of God, and conducive to the happiness of men.

IV. A multitude of uncontradicted miracles, and his resurrection, prove that he was sent by God, and that his religion was true.

Q. Why do you believe the gospel history of our Saviour's miracles?

A. (1.) Because it is utterly incredible that a person whose life is so holy, who aimed at nothing but promoting the glory of God by his doctrine, and sealed the truth of it with his blood, should have claimed a power from God of working miracles, if he had not been possessed of it.

(2.) The testimony of his apostles, who saw and bore witness to his miracles, amidst the greatest sufferings, and continued constant in it to the death, appears to be every way worthy of credit.

(3.) They were not denied even by the Jews themselves, who crucified our Saviour, and did all they could to destroy the credit of his gospel.

Q. Why was it necessary that Christ should rise from the dead?

A. Because he foretold, and appealed to his resurrection, as a proof that he came from God.

Q. What assurance have we that he did rise?

A. (1.) If he had not, his apostles would never have believed him to be the Christ or Messiah, that is, the promised Saviour of the world, nor have undertaken to preach the gospel in his name.

(2.) The apostles could not be mistaken in this case, since they knew him perfectly, and conversed with him forty days before his ascension into heaven.

(3.) They were enabled to work miracles in proof of his resurrection and ascension.

Q. How doth it appear the apostles worked miracles?

A. (1.) If they had not, their professing to do it would have destroyed the credit of their doctrine and testimony at once.

(2.) Christianity prevailed over all sorts of opposition from Jews and gentiles, by the force of truth and evidence only; for it was propagated only by fair and gentle methods; the preachers of it not being assisted by any worldly advantages.

Q. What other arguments are there for the truth of the Christian religion?

A. V. Where it prevaileth it changeth men into divine persons, opens their minds, sweetens their tempers, governs their passions, and corrects their lives.

VI. The predictions of its author are many of them fulfilled, especially the destruction of Jerusalem.

Q. Why do we believe that the writings of the New Testament give us a true account of the doctrines and life of our Saviour.

A. 1. They were drawn up by persons that were either eye and ear-witnesses of what they relate, or had their account of it from such as were.

2. They are written with evident marks of candour, honesty, and piety.

3. The authors of them were endued with miraculous gifts of the Spirit, that they might be qualified to preach the gospel to the world.

Q. Are there any doctrines or laws in it contrary to natural religion or the dictates of reason?

A. No. 1 Cor. x. 15, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say."

Q. Did the blindness and wickedness of men make a revelation from God highly needful?

A. Yes. Rom. iii. 9, 23, "Both Jews and Gentiles were all under sin, and had come short of the glory of God.

Q. Is not the Holy Bible the greatest blessing to the world?

A. Yes. 2 Tim. iii. 15, "The holy scriptures are able to make wise unto salvation."

SECTION III.

Q. WHAT doth the holy bible teach us concerning God?

A. Some important truths about his nature and attributes; some concerning his relation to the world; some concerning him as compared with other beings.

Q. 1. What do the scriptures teach us concerning God himself, his nature, and attributes; 1. considered in themselves?

A. 1. They teach us, in general, that God is every way perfect. Matt. v. 48, "Our Father who is in heaven is perfect."

2. More particularly they teach us that God is a Spirit, that is, an invisible, incorporeal being, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see." 1 Tim. vi. 16; John iv. 24, v. 37.

Q. What sort of a spirit do the scriptures teach us that God is?

A. 1. An eternal, or self-existent spirit. Ps. lxxxiii. 18. "His name alone is Jehovah." 1 Tim. i. 17, vi. 16, "The King eternal, who only hath immortality."

2. An unchangeable spirit. James i. 17, "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

3. Every where present. Ps. cxxxix. 7, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

4. Perfectly happy, or self-sufficient. 1 Tim. vi. 15, "The blessed and only Potentate."

Q. What do the scriptures teach us concerning God's attributes, 2. considered as respecting his creatures?

A. 1. That he hath perfect knowledge. Ps. cxlvii. 4, 5, "His understanding is infinite."

2. Perfect wisdom. 1 Tim. i. 17, "The only wise God."

3. Perfect power. Rev. xix. 6, "The Lord God omnipotent."

4. Perfect goodness. Ps. cxix. 68, "He is good, and doeth good." Matt. xix. 17, "There is none good but one; that is God."

Q. How is God's goodness distinguished?

A. (1.) Into general benevolence to all living creatures. Ps. cxlv. 9, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

(2.) Complacential love to the righteous. Ps. cxlvii. 11, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them who fear him."

(3.) Goodness to the wicked, styled long-suffering and mercy. Ps. lxxxvi. 15, "The Lord is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy."

Q. What is the next attribute of God respecting his creatures?

A. 5. Perfect justice. Deut. xxxii. 4, "All his ways are judgment. A God without iniquity; just and right is he." Ps. cxix. 142, "His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness."

6. Perfect truth and faithfulness. Deut. vii. 9, "A faithful God, who keepeth covenant."

7. Perfect holiness. 1 John i. 5, "In him is no darkness." Isa. vi. 3, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."

8. That in all his nature, attributes, and works, he is incomprehensible. Job xi. 7, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

Q. II. What do the scriptures teach us concerning God, as to his relation to the world?

A. 1. That God is the creator (maker and former) of all things. Neh. ix. 6, "Thou hast made the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and the seas, and all that is therein."

2. That God is the preserver of all things. Acts xvii. 28, "In whom we live, move, and subsist." Ps. xxxvi. 6, "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast."

3. That God is Lord (disposer and governor) of all things. Ps. cxxxv. 6, "Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doeth he." Dan. iv. 25, "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Q. III. What do the scriptures teach us concerning God, as compared with other beings?

A. 1. That he is the only God. Deut. iv. 39, "There is none else besides him." John xvii. 3, "The only true God."

2. That there is none like him. Exod. xv. 11, "Who is like unto thee?"

3. That he is greater than all. Ps. lxxvii. 13, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

SECTION IV.

Q. WHAT do the sacred scriptures teach us concerning the nature and first condition of man?

A. 1. That his original state was holy and happy. Gen. i. 27, "God created man in his own image." Ch. ii. 8, 9, "God put him in the garden, where was the tree of life."

2. That he fell into sin and misery through the temptation of the devil. 2 Cor. xi. 3, "The serpent beguiled them through his subtilty." Rev. xx. 2, "The old serpent is the devil."

Q. What is his present state according to the scriptures?

A. 1. Sinful. Eccl. vii. 20, "There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not." Rom. iii. 19, "All the world is guilty before God." Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

2. Mortal. Rom. v. 12—19, "Death reigned by sin: death hath passed upon all men."

3. Of short and uncertain continuance. Job xiv. 1, "Man is of few days." James iv. 14, "Life is a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

4. Subject to pain and trouble. Job v. 7, "Man is born to trouble."

5. Filled with vanity. Ps. xxxix. 5, "Every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity."

6. A state of ignorance. Job viii. 9, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing."

7. A state of weakness and insufficiency. Ps. ciii. 14, "He remembereth that we are dust." Luke xii. 26, "Ye are not able to do that thing which is least."

Q. Doth not our own observation and experience testify the truth of the scripture account?

A. Yes.

SECTION V.

Q. What doth the bible teach us concerning men's recovery or redemption out of this dismal state?

A. 1. That God the Father promised and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to save the world of perishing sinners. John iii. 16, 17, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hath wrought out salvation for men. Matt. i. 21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him."

Q. How has Jesus Christ wrought out salvation for us, or how doth he become our Saviour?

A. 1. By instructing men in all necessary doctrine and duty, as the great prophet, and publishing a new covenant. John xviii. 37, "He came to bear witness to the truth." Ch. viii. 12, "I am the light of the world."

2. By living a holy, useful life, as our example; fulfilling all righteousness. Heb. vii. 26, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled." 1 Pet. ii. 21, "He left us an example, that we should follow his steps."

3. By shedding his blood, as our sacrifice; and now pleading his blood before God as our high priest. Matt. xx. 28, "He gave himself a ransom." Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Heb. ix. 24, "He appears in the presence of God for us."

4. By rising again, as the conqueror of death; publishing his laws, as a great king; and ascending into heaven, as accepted and approved of God. Rom. i. 4, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." Heb. i. 3, "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Matt. xxviii. 18, "And hath all power given to him."

5. By sending down the Holy Spirit, in his extraordinary gifts and operations upon the apostles and first Christians. Acts ii. 4, "The apostles were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues," and by his ordinary operation on all men, especially believers. Eph. v. 9, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth."

6. By his ministers, who, under him, instruct, guide, and edify his church. Eph. iv. 11—13, "Christ gave pastors and teachers, for the edifying the body of Christ."

7. By his raising all mankind, acting as Judge of the world, condemning the wicked, and saving the righteous. Acts xvii. 31, "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained."

Q. What is the state of men by redemption, and under the gospel?

A. 1. A state of great light and knowledge. 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God—hath shined into our hearts." 1 Pet. ii. 9, "And called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

2. A state of righteousness or justification, and of holiness. Col. i. 14, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." 1 Cor. vi. 11, "Ye are washed, sanctified, justified, by the Spirit of our God."

3. A state of life. Rom. vi. 11, "Reckon yourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ." 2 Tim. i. 10, "He hath abolished death, and brought the immortal life into light."

4. A state of happiness. Acts iii. 26, "God sent his Son to bless us." Psalm ii. 12, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Q. Will wicked men receive any advantage from the gospel in the end?

A. No. To them it will be a "savour of death unto death," 2 Cor. ii. 16. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and

Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them," Mark vi. 11.

SECTION VI.

Q. Of what other beings do the scriptures give us an account?

A. 1. Of good angels. Gen. xxxii. 1, 2, "They are God's host." Psalm ciii. 21, "His ministers, who do his pleasure."

2. Of evil angels, or devils. Jude 6, "They are angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation."

Q. Doth God govern the world, and Christ the church, by the ministry of angels?

A. Yes. Gen. xxviii. 12, "The angels of God ascending and descending." Heb. i. 13, 14, "They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister."

Q. Are the good angels subject to Christ?

A. Yes. 1 Pet. iii. 22, "Angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

Q. Are evils angels subject to God?

A. Yes. Job. i. 12, "Satan could not touch Job without God's leave."

Q. Are they also subject to Christ?

A. Yes. They trembled at his approach; and could not hurt the swine without his leave, Matt. viii. 29–32. "They are in chains," 2 Pet. ii. 4, and "cannot hurt good men," 1 John v. 18.

PART II.

THE DUTY OF MAN TO GOD; OR, THE DIVINE VIRTUES.

SECTION I.

Q. What general duty does every reasonable creature, and every Christian, owe to God?

A. Godliness. 1 Tim. ii. 2, "To live in all godliness."

Q. What is godliness?

A. A disposition of soul to give God all his rights, according to all claims he hath from us.

Q. What other general duty doth a hearer of the gospel owe God?

A. Consent to the terms of the gospel covenant, or to the conditions of salvation.

Q. What is the first particular duty that every rational creature oweth to God?

A. Contemplation, or thinking on God. Eccles. xii. 1, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Q. Should we not be careful to entertain just and honourable apprehensions of him?

A. Yes. Acts xvii. 24—29, "God, who made the world, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is like unto silver and gold," &c.

Q. Is not every creature obliged to use his best powers in the best manner?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Q. Is not the thinking power the best power in man?

A. Yes. Job xxxii. 8, "There is a spirit in man."

Q. Can we use this power better than in inquiring after God; and in contemplating his excellencies?

A. No. Job xxxv. 10, "Where is God my maker? Ch. xxii. 21, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace."

SECTION II.

Q. WHAT is the second duty of man toward God?

A. Faith. Heb. xi. 6, "He who cometh unto God (or professeth religion) must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him."

Q. What is faith in God?

A. A persuasion that there is a God; that he governs, and will judge the world. Mark xi. 32, "And Jesus said, Have faith in God."

Q. What effects should this faith produce?

A. 1. Public profession of religion, and acts of worship. Rom. x. 9, 10, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Jonah iii. 5, "The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast."

2. Inward trust and hope. 1 Pet. v. 7, "Casting all your care on God, for he careth for you."

3. Steady obedience. Titus iii. 8, "They who have believed in God, must be careful to maintain good works."

4. Courage, and submission to his will. Heb. xi. 27, "Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. It is to believe that he is the Son of God and Saviour of men; to profess his doctrine, to trust in him, and to obey him. John viii. 24, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed." Eph. i. 12, "Who first trusted in Christ." Heb. v. 9, "Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them who obey him."

Q. What regards to the gospel will this faith in Christ produce?

A. It will lead us to give credit to Christ's doctrines; to trust his promises; to fear his threatenings, and comply with all his

wise, holy, and just demands. Mark xvi. 16, "Preach the gospel to every creature; he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he who believeth not shall be damned."

Q. What is faith in the Holy Ghost?

A. Such a persuasion of his being sent from the Father and Son, as leadeth us to give credit to the inspired apostles, and to desire, value, and improve all his assisting, sanctifying, comforting influences; and which maketh us very much afraid to grieve him. 2 Pet. i. 21, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Eph. iv. 30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed."

Q. What is faith as it respects another life?

A. It is the evidence of unseen things. Or, such a credit given to the promises of eternal life, such a desire and hope of it, as leads us to deny ourselves whatever would unfit us for it, and to strive to be ready for it. 1 John v. 4, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Q. Should it be our concern to improve in this grace of faith?

A. Yes. 2 Thess. i. 3, "Your faith groweth exceedingly." Luke xvii. 5, "Lord, increase our faith."

SECTION III.

Q. WHAT is the third duty of man toward God?

A. Dependence or trust. Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. In all thy ways acknowledge him."

Q. What is trust in God?

A. A firm persuasion that God can and will give us all necessary good and keep us from all real evil, if we fear and serve him; and a reliance on him to do so, according to his word.

Q. What therefore are the proper foundations of this trust?

A. The all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God. Eph. iii. 20, "He is able to do abundantly above all we ask or think." Heb. x. 23, "He is faithful who hath promised."

Q. What tempers and vices stand opposite to trust in God?

A. 1. Self-conceit. Prov. iii. 5, 7, "Lean not to thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes."

2. Anxiety and fretfulness at the course of providence. Isa. xxviii. 16, "He that believeth shall not make haste." Psalm xxxvii. 1, 7, 8, "Fret not thyself to do evil."

3. Trusting and glorying in wealth. Jer. ix. 23, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches."

4. Too great expectations from man. Jer. xvii. 5, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man."

Q. What are the chief things we commit to God by an act of trust?

A. 1. Our souls, to keep them in this world and make them happy in another. 1 Pet. iv. 19, "Commit the keeping of your souls to him, as unto a faithful Creator." Jude 24, "He is able

to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before his presence."

2. Our bodies, to provide for them during life, and to raise them up after death. 1 Cor. vi. 13, 14, "The Lord is for the body; and God will raise up us by his own power."

3. Our families, children, and friends, living and dying. Gen. l. 24, "Joseph said, I die, and God will surely visit you." Psalm xxvii. 10, "When father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." Jer. xlix. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children with me."

4. The public interest of the world and church. 2 Kings xix. 14, "Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord." Matt. vi. 13, "For thine is the kingdom."

Q. What cares about the world, or for daily bread, are unlawful?

A. 1. Such as proceed from an undue love to the world. Prov. xxiii. 4, 5, "Labour not to be rich."

2. Such as engage us in any unjust actions. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, "They that will be rich fall into snares, and many foolish and hurtful lusts. The love of money is the root of all evil."

3. Such as are accompanied with melancholy, distrust, and discontent. Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with the cares of this life." Ch. xii. 29, "Neither be ye of doubtful mind."

Q. What great truth and duty doth trust in God suppose?

A. The being of a providence, and our acknowledging that providence.

Q. What is acknowledging providence?

A. It imports a constant serious sense of the dependence of all things and all events upon God, as supreme governor of the world.

Q. Is the providence of God general, over all worlds, countries, persons, and things?

A. Yes. Psalm xxii. 28, "The kingdom is the Lord's." Psalm ciii. 19, "His kingdom ruleth over all."

Q. Is there also a particular providence over all particular persons and things?

A. Yes. Luke xii. 4—7, "Not a sparrow is forgotten before God; even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Q. Should not every man then own and eye God, in ordering and directing his birth, condition, education, capacities, settlement, habitation, actions, alliances, helps, successes, afflictions; in a word, all his ways and affairs?

A. Yes. Psalm lvii. 2, "I will cry unto God most high, that performeth all things for me."

Q. Is not daily prayer and praise a natural and proper acknowledgment of God's constant providence, of our continual dependence, and increasing obligations?

A. Yes. Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

SECTION IV.

Q. What is the fourth duty which man oweth to God?

A. Fear. Deut. vi. 13, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God."

Q. In how many senses is the fear of God taken in the holy scriptures.

A. In three principally.

1. To signify the whole inward duty of man to God. Eccl. xii. 13, "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man."

2. For an habitual reverence of his supreme authority, greatness, and majesty. Jer. x. 7, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?"

3. For a dread of offending, and a desire to please him. Psalm iv. 4, "Stand in awe and sin not." Heb. xii. 28, "Serve the Lord with godly fear."

Q. How may we describe the fear of God, so as to comprehend all the foregoing senses?

A. It is such a thoughtful, habitual regard to God, as Governor and Judge of the world, as maketh us always desirous to please him, and cautious not to offend him. Prov. ix. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Q. Is not God, as a Father and benefactor, a proper object of the fear even of good men?

A. Yes. Hos. iii. 5, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness."

Q. Should men be every day governed by this principle of godly fear?

A. Yes. Prov. xxiii. 17, "Be thou in the fear of God all the day long." 1 Cor. vii. 24, "Let every man abide in his calling with God."

Q. Is God, as a punisher, a proper object of sinners' fears?

A. Yes. Psalm cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee."

Q. Hath God, in his settled course of things and in his threatenings, annexed pain and misery to disobedience and sin?

A. Yes. Jer. ii. 19, "It is an evil thing and bitter to forsake God." Prov. viii. 36, "He that sinneth wrongeth his own soul."

Q. Have we reason to hope God will enable us to live in his fear, if we ask him?

A. Yes. Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

SECTION V.

Q. What is the fifth duty of man towards God?

A. Love. Matt. xxii. 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Q. What is it to love God?

A. It is to have our minds filled with a delightful sense of his infinite perfections, to be devoted to his will and interests, to be warmly grateful for his favours, and to long for that time when we shall know, praise, and obey him better.

Q. By what marks may a person judge that he loves God.

A. 1. When he contemplates God with delight, esteemeth him his chief good, desireth his favour, and to be ever with him. Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. Thou art my portion for ever."

2. When he serveth God faithfully, taketh pleasure in the duties of religion and in conversing with God. 1 John v. 3, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Ps. xxxvii. 4, "Delight thyself also in the Lord."

3. When he hath an ardent zeal for his glory. 1 Kings xix. 10, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts."

4. When he submits to God's will by patience. Heb. xii. 9, "Shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"

5. When he loveth and doeth good to men. 1 John iv. 20, 21, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

6. When he prefers God's favour and rewards before all other gains and pleasures. Ps. lxiii. 3, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." 1 John ii. 15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

7. When he loveth Christ in sincerity 1 John v. 1, "He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Q. How may we obtain and improve in the love of God?

A. By prayer for the influences of the Spirit. Rom. v. 5, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us."

SECTION VI.

Q. WHAT is the sixth duty man oweth to God?

A. Obedience; or, a disposition to serve God with all the powers of soul and body. Exod. xv. 26, "Thou shalt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God; and do that which is right in his sight, and keep all his statutes."

Q. Which are the two chief branches of obedience?

A. Avoiding whatever God hath forbidden, and doing whatever he hath required. Isa. i. 16, 17, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." Deut. v. 32, "Turn not aside to the right hand, nor to the left."

Q. What is the rule and law of our obedience?

A. God's will, however discovered or revealed. Matt. vii. 21, "He shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Q. Seeing the gospel is the revealed will of God, will those certainly be condemned, who hear the gospel, but obey it not?

A. Yes. 2 Thess. i. 8, "Christ will be revealed from heaven, to take vengeance on them who obey not the gospel."

Q. What sort of obedience is true and acceptable?

A. 1. Sincere obedience, when it proceeds from the heart or a principle of love, and is cheerful. 1 Sam. xii. 24, "Serve him in truth with all your heart." 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, "Serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind."

2. General, as to the practice of all duties and the avoiding of all sins. Ps. cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

3. Steady and abiding. John viii. 31, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples." Rom. ii. 7, "To them who continue patient in well doing, eternal life,"

4. Growing and tending towards perfection. 2 Pet. i. 5, "Add to your faith virtue," &c. Phil. iii. 14, "Press toward the mark."

Q. How may we distinguish the failings of good men from the faults of bad men?

A. 1. They sin not with deliberation, contrivance, and design. Ps. xxxvi. 4, "The wicked deviseth mischief."

2. If they sin they soon recover themselves by repentance, and correct their ways. Job xlii. 6, "I abhor myself, I repent." Job xxxiv. 32, "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

3. They live not in sin; are not guilty of prevailing, habitual iniquity. 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (or practise) sin."

Q. What are good works?

A. All actions, words, and thoughts, which are agreeable to God's word, and which have a tendency to do good.

Q. Are good works necessary to salvation, according to the gospel?

A. Yes. Matt. v. 16, 20, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Q. What are the distinguishing characters of the acceptable performance of good works?

A. 1. When we are persuaded in conscience, upon deliberate and unprejudiced inquiry, that they are good. Rom. xiv. 5, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" or act according to the full persuasion of his mind.

Q. What is conscience?

A. It is the mind reflecting upon itself, and judging of its own actions, as compared with the law. Rom. ii. 15, "Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another."

Q. What further conditions are neccessary to the acceptable performance of good works?

A. 2. That they be done for a good end; as to glorify God, and promote the real welfare of men. 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Rom. xiv. 19, "Let us follow things which make for peace, and whereby one may edify another."

Q. What is it to glorify God?

A. To serve and obey him in such a manner as to excite in others a reverence for him and animate them to his service.

3. That we have an humble sense of their imperfections, particularly that they cannot merit eternal life; and that we look for acceptance through Christ. Luke xvii. 10, "When ye have done all things, which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." Eph. i. 6, "We are accepted in the beloved."

SECTION VII.

Q. WHAT is the seventh duty men owe to God?

A. Submission or resignation of mind to all his providential disposals. Matt. vi. 10, "Thy will be done."

Q. What doth submission mean?

A. That we endeavour after such a temper and disposition as to be always well pleased with whatsoever God does.

Q. What are the advantages and excellencies of this temper?

A. 1. It is honourable to God. Mal. i. 6, "If I be a father, where is my honour? saith the Lord."

2. It is a happy temper for ourselves. Phil. iv. 7, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Luke xxi. 19, "By patience we possess our own souls."

Q. Is this temper no more than to be willing that God govern his own world, and rule all his own creatures.

A. No. 1 Sam. iii. 18, "Let the Lord do what seemeth him good."

Q. Is it not highly fit we should thus submit?

A. Yes. Job xxxiv. 33, "Should it be according to thy mind?"

Q. What is a sufficient ground of this temper?

A. The wisdom and goodness of God. Prov. iii. 12, for, "He correcteth us as a father doth his son."

Q. What are the chief branches of this temper?

A. 1. Submission to all labours and services that God re-

quireth. Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Rev. ii. 2, 3, "And for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted."

2. Submission to all sufferings and afflictions which God layeth upon us. Heb. xii. 5, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

3. Submission, when God delayeth promised or expected good. Lam. iii. 26, "It is good for a man to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God."

Q. What vice or wrong temper is opposite to this godly temper?

A. Fretfulness, murmuring, uneasiness, and distrust. Jude 16, "These are murmurers, complainers." Psalm lxxviii. 19. "Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

Q. When we suffer from God's hand for sin or for trial, what considerations should lead us to submission?

A. 1. That we deserve the heaviest afflictions. Micah vii. 9, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

2. That we need afflictions. 1 Pet. i. 6, "If need be, ye are in heaviness."

3. That, if we are submissive, we shall be made better by them. Heb. xii. 11, "Chastening yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Q. What considerations should make us submissive, when we suffer from men for the service of God?

A. That it is our honour so to suffer, and that we shall be rewarded for it. 1 Pet. ii. 19, iv. 13, 14, "It is praiseworthy. Happy are ye. When his glory is revealed, ye shall be glad with exceeding joy."

Q. What is the duty of the sick and afflicted?

A. 1. To examine conscience and life. Lam. iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways."

2. To send for a minister. Isa. xxxviii. 1—3, "The prophet came to sick Hezekiah, who prayed and wept."

3. To pray and confess sin. James v. 13, 16, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Confess your faults one to another."

4. To exercise repentance and faith in Christ. Lam. iii. 20, "My soul is humbled in me." 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed."

5. To be reconciled to neighbours. Luke xxiii. 34, "Father, forgive them."

6. To settle affairs. Isa. xxxviii. 1, "Set thine house in order."

Q. What are the peculiar duties of the aged?

A. 1. Cheerfully to resign business, diversions, and every

departing joy, to those that are young. 1 Sam. xii. 2, &c., "I am old and grey headed; behold my sons are with you," &c. 2 Sam. xix. 34, 37, "And Barzillai said, How long have I to live, that I should go with the king? Let my son go."

2. To settle worldly affairs, in order to get clear of worldly affections. Isa. xxxviii. 1, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die."

3. To review accounts; gather in comforts and evidences, and strengthen every habit of piety. Luke xvi. 1, 2, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." 2 Tim. iv. 6—8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." John ix. 4, "I must work the works of God while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."

4. Seriously to recommend religion to posterity. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind." Titus ii. 3, "That the aged be teachers of good things."

5. To meditate on death and heaven. Gen. xxvii. 2, "Isaac said, Behold I am old, and know not the day of my death." Gen. xlix. 18, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." 2 Tim. iv. 8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Q. What are the duties of the poor?

A. 1. Trust in God. Psalm x. 14, "The poor committeth himself unto thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless."

2. Industry and frugality. Prov. xii. 23, "Much food is in the tillage of the poor." Ruth ii. 3, "And she went, and came and gleaned in the field of Boaz."

3. Patience and contentment. 1 Sam. ii. 7, "The Lord maketh poor." Phil. iv. 11, "In whatever state, therewith to be content."

4. Watchfulness against temptations to envy, murmuring, stealing. Psalm xxxvii. 1, "Fret not thyself, nor be envious." Prov. xxx. 9, "Lest I be poor, and steal."

5. An obliging temper and gratitude. Ruth ii. 20, "And Naomi said, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness."

6. Care to get spiritual and eternal riches. James ii. 5, "The poor should be rich in faith, and heirs of the promised kingdom."

SECTION VIII.

Q. What is the eighth duty man oweth towards God?

A. Imitation of him. Eph. v. 1, "Be ye followers (or imitators) of God, as dear children."

Q. But are there not some virtues and sacred dispositions

in men, to which there is nothing in God which bears a resemblance ?

A. Yes. Such as reverential fear, trust, submission, obedience, repentance, and faith in a mediator.

Q. And are there not some perfections in God which we cannot imitate, and which none but an enemy would affect to imitate ?

A. Yes.

Q. What are they ?

A. Independence, supremacy, perfect knowledge, universal presence, almighty power. Ezek. xxviii. 2, 9, "The prince of Tyre said, I am a god, and set his heart as the heart of God. Thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee."

Q. How must we imitate God ?

A. As children imitate a wise and good father; and as far as he proposeth himself to our imitation.

Q. By what name do we usually call the imitable perfections and excellencies of God ?

A. His moral perfections.

Q. Wherein should we endeavour to imitate and grow like God ?

A. 1. In knowledge and wisdom. 1 John i. 7, "Walk in the light, as he is in the light." Col. iii. 10, "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of God."

2. In holiness. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, for I am holy."

3. In justice and righteousness. Eph. iv. 24, "Created after God in righteousness."

4. In truth and faithfulness. Deut. xxxii. 4, "A God of truth." Isa. lxiii. 8, "His people are children who will not lie."

5. In all goodness. Jer. ix. 24, "I am the Lord, who exerciseth loving kindness in the earth; in these things I delight."

Q. In what branches of goodness should we endeavour to be like God ?

A. 1. In love. 1 John iv. 11, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

2. In mercy and pity. Luke vi. 36, "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

3. In forbearing and forgiving. Eph. iv. 32, "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

4. In doing good; freely communicating to those who want, even to our enemies. Matt. v. 44, 45, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good."

5. In not being weary of doing good. Psalm lii. 1, "The goodness of God endureth continually." Gal. vi. 9, "Let us not be weary in well doing."

Q. But as no man hath seen God, nor can see him, how can we imitate God?

A. To obviate this objection the more effectually, God hath sent his Son into our world, and in our flesh, to be our example. John xiv. 9, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Q. Does a godly and a Christian life therefore consist in a life spent in imitation of God and Christ?

A. Yes. 1 John iii. 3, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure."

SECTION IX.

Q. WHAT is the ninth duty of man towards God?

A. Honour and worship. Luke iv. 8, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Q. What is honour, worship, or adoration, as due to God?

A. A solemn acknowledgment, or expression of our belief and esteem, of his infinite perfections.

Q. Is this enjoined by the first command?

A. Yes. Exod. xx. 3, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me."

Q. How may worship be distinguished?

A. Into internal and external.

Q. First. What does internal worship carry in it, and comprehend?

A. All that esteem, and those affections of soul, which are suited to God's excellencies.

Q. What then is chiefly to be regarded by us in worshipping and serving God?

A. Our inward disposition, or the state of our mind. Psalm ciii. 1, "All that is within me, bless his holy name." Mark vii. 6, "Hypocrites honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Q. But is the posture of the body to be entirely disregarded?

A. No. Psalm xcv. 6, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Luke xxii. 41; Acts xx. 36, "Jesus and Paul kneeled down and prayed."

Q. What state of mind is necessary to an acceptable worshipping of God?

A. 1. An intelligent and attentive mind. John iv. 24, "That we worship God in spirit, and sing praises with understanding," Psalm xlvii. 7.

2. A holy and reverent mind, filled with devout affections. Lev. xix. 30, "Reverence my sanctuary." Heb. xii. 28, "Serve God with reverence and godly fear."

3. A calm, unruffled mind. 1 Cor. vii. 35, "Wait on God without distraction."

4. A charitable mind, free from malice and implacableness. 1 Tim. ii. 8, "Lift up holy hands without wrath."

Q. Second. What doth the external worship of God refer to?

A. To God himself, sacred things, and the solemnities of worship.

Q. I. What acts or duties of external worship respect God himself?

A. (1.) Seeking his favour by prayer. Phil. iv. 6, "In every thing make your requests known unto God by prayer." Luke xvii. 1, "Men ought always to pray."

Q. Where are we instructed how to pray?

A. In that excellent directory and pattern composed by Christ, called the Lord's Prayer.

Q. What is the chief ground of prayer?

A. Dependence upon God. Matt. vi. 9—14, "Our Father," &c. Psalm lxii. 8, "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us."

Q. What are the chief uses of prayer?

A. 1. To sanctify us; as it disengageth us from the world, and maketh us like to God. John ix. 31, "If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

2. To comfort us, as it is a casting ourselves on God. Ps. cxxxviii. 3, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

3. To preserve in us a sense that we depend constantly on God, and owe every thing to him. Matt. vi. 11, "Give us this day our daily bread." Deut. viii. 3, "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by the word of God."

4. To obtain the blessings we want. Matt. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find."

Q. What is another act of external worship respecting God himself?

A. (2.) Acknowledging God in all we enjoy by thanksgiving, particularly by singing psalms. 1 Thess. v. 18, "In every thing give thanks." Ps. l. 23, "He who offereth praise glorifieth God." Col. iii. 16, "Singing psalms and hymns with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Q. Is it our duty particularly to pray and give thanks at our meals?

A. Yes. John vi. 11; Acts xxvii. 35, "Jesus and Paul took bread and gave thanks to God." 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word and prayer."

Q. What is another act of external worship?

A. (3.) Endeavouring to learn God's will by attending public instruction. Deut. xxxi. 12, "Gather my people, men, women,

children, servants, that they may hear, learn, fear, and do."

(4.) Devoting our goods, as there is occasion, to his service; or bounty towards religious works. Prov. iii. 9, "Honour the Lord with thy substance."

(5.) Consecrating our bodies unto God, as sacrifices. Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."

Q. II. What acts or duties of external worship respect sacred things; and which, by reason of their relation to God, are called by his name?

A. In general; a due reverence, in all our words and actions, for whatever beareth a relation to God; as his name, Son, Spirit, his word, and house, and the Christian sacraments. Ezek. xxii. 26, 31, "They have profaned my holy things, and have put no difference between the holy and profane, therefore have I consumed them."

Q. Particularly. What are the extremes to which a due respect for all sacred things stands opposed?

A. 1. Superstition; which is placing holiness or unholiness in such things as ought not to be esteemed holy or unholy. Rom. xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c. 1 Cor. viii. 8.

2. Profaneness; which is using those things as vile and common, which in themselves are sacred. Lev. xix. 8, "He shall bear his iniquity who profaneth hallowed things."

Q. III. What are the circumstances or solemnities respecting external worship?

A. Persons ministering in worship; times when, and places where, we worship.

Q. 1. As to persons. Hath the light of reason directed men to appoint some to be instructors of others, and to officiate in sacred things?

A. Yes. Gen. xlvii. 22, "Egyptian priests." Acts xiv. 13, "Priests of Jupiter."

Q. Do the necessities of mankind require this?

A. Yes. Rom. x. 14, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Acts viii. 31, "How can I understand, except some one guide me?"

Q. Has the wisdom of God, in the old and new revelation, appointed it?

A. Yes. Exod. xl. 13, "Aaron and his sons are sanctified." Mal. ii. 7, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." Eph. iv. 11, "Christ gave pastors and teachers."

Q. 2. As to times. Are solemn assemblies, at stated times, necessary for the public and general instruction of mankind?

A. Yes. Lev. xxiii. 4, "There were holy convocations;" or assemblings on a religious account. 1 Cor. xi. 18, "When ye come together in the church."

Q. Should not every family and person be a member of some religious assembly: and thereby contribute to keep up public worship in the world?

A. Yes. Acts ii. 44, 46, "All who believed were in the temple." Heb. x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."

Q. Is it not a convenient and gracious institution of God, that one day in seven be kept holy?

A. Yes. Neh. ix. 14, "Thou madest known unto them the holy sabbath."

Q. Why is the Lord's day observed as a day of religious public worship and instruction?

A. Because it has been kept holy in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, from the time of the apostles to this time, in all Christian nations. Acts xx. 7, "On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread." 1 Cor. xvi. 2, "On the first day of the week lay by you in store." Rev. i. 10, "The Lord's day."

Q. How is the Lord's day to be sanctified?

A. By laying aside all worldly labours and recreations, and employing it in the public and private exercises of religion. Exod. xx. 8, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Isa. lviii. 13, "Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words on my holy day."

Q. 3. As to places. Is one place, in itself, more holy than another?

A. No. Matt. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together, I will be with them." 1 Tim. ii. 8, "I will that men pray every where."

Q. What are the chief rules for the forms and circumstances of divine worship?

A. 1. That it be pure, or conformable to the scriptures, Exod. xxiii. 13, "In all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect." Matt. xv. 9, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

2. That it be in a known language. 1 Cor. xiv. 11—27, "Otherwise, he who speaketh will be a barbarian to me."

3. That it be with grave and decent order. 1 Cor. xiv. 26—40, "Let all things be done to edifying,—decently, and in order."

Q. What other acts may be reckoned parts of external worship?

A. Religious oaths and vows. Deut. vi. 13, "Thou shalt swear by his name." Jer. iv. 2, "Thou shalt swear the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness."

Q What is an oath?

A. A solemn appeal to God, as witness and judge of the truth of what we affirm; and of our sincerity in what we

promise. Heb. vi. 16, "Men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."

Q. What is a vow?

A. A solemn promise made to God.

Q. Is it useful sometimes to bind our souls to God by solemn oaths and vows?

A. Yes. Ps. lxxvi. 11, "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God."

Q. What should be the chief matter of our vows?

A. The known duties of the Christian life, to which we are previously bound by God.

Q. Is it not often inconvenient for men to engage themselves by vow, to what God hath not previously made their duties?

A. Yes. Eccl. v. 2, 4, 5, "Be not rash with thy mouth; better not vow, than vow and not pay."

Q. Is rash swearing very sinful?

A. Yes. James v. 12, "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven nor earth, nor any other oath."

Q. How may a man correct this sinful habit of profane swearing?

A. By watching against the temptations to it; such as anger, strong drink, eagerness of spirit, gaming.

2. By having a monitor to check him.

3. By submitting to a fine, or some other self-punishment, when he offends.

Q. Is it a great sin to use the name of God in a profane, light, and irreverent manner?

A. Yes. Exod. xx. 7, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Q. Is it the nature and design of both the gospel sacraments (or positive ceremonial institutions of Jesus Christ) to bind us to be religious?

A. Yes. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, "Baptize them, and teach them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Gal. v. 3, "So circumcision was a bond to keep the whole law." 1 Cor. x. 16—21, "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils."

Q. Are baptism and the Lord's supper the only two sacraments of Christ's religion?

A. Yes.

Q. Of what parts do these institutions consist?

A. Of two; the outward action or ceremony, and the signified grace and duty.

Q. What does the phrase, "In the name," in the form of baptism signify?

A. 1. Into the belief and profession of that religion, which was originally from the Father, preached by the Son, and con-

firmed by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thus "baptizing unto Moses," is baptizing into the belief and reception of what he delivered. 1 Cor. x. 2.

2. Into an obligation to obey all those commands which were given to God, by his Son, as conditions of salvation.

Q. What is baptism then?

A. An act whereby, being washed with water, we are solemnly dedicated to the service of God, as his covenant people, in that method of religion which his Son came into the world to establish, and which was confirmed by prophecies and miracles of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What doth baptism oblige us to?

A. To give up ourselves to God through Christ, and employ our lives in his service. Gal. iii. 27, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Q. What is the Lord's supper?

A. A public religious act, in which Christians eat bread and drink wine in memory of Christ and his death, as a sacrifice for sin; give themselves up to God in covenant, and declare their expectation of Christ's second coming.

Q. Doth it succeed the passover?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. v. 7, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Q. What was the passover?

A. A family feast, kept by the Israelites, upon a whole lamb roasted, in remembrance of God's passing over and not killing any in their houses, when he slew the first-born in all the houses of Egypt.

Q. Who are qualified for the Lord's supper?

A. All who believe the gospel, and endeavour to live according to it.

Q. What sort of examination is proper before communion therein?

A. Of our whole state, which is most important; and of our present disposition, which ought also to be attended to. 1 Cor. xi. 28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat."

Q. Who by the gospel, are excluded from the Lord's Supper, or partake of it unworthily?

A. 1. Unbelievers and partakers with idolaters. 1 Cor. x. 21, "Ye cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of devils."

2. All who openly violate the laws of Christ. Psalm l. 16, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?

3. Those that make no difference between the Lord's supper and a common meal. 1 Cor. xi. 29, "He eateth unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body."

Q. What are the benefits of the Lord's supper?

A. 1. It impresseth and keepeth on the mind the memory of Christ's death, as a motive to love and obedience. 1 Cor. xi. 24, "This do in remembrance of me."

2. It confirms our hope of pardon and all spiritual blessings. Matt. xxvi. 28, "This is my blood of the new testament (or covenant), shed for the remission of sins."

3. It bindeth us to a holy life, as therein we acknowledge and renew our covenant with God, sealed with the blood of Christ. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, "Christ is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with malice and wickedness, but sincerity and truth."

4. It increaseth love and union amongst Christians. 1 Cor. x. 17, xii. 13, "We are all partakers of that one bread, and have been all made to drink into one spirit."

5. It expresseth and strengtheneth our faith in Christ's second coming. 1 Cor. xi. 26, "As oft as ye eat the Lord's supper, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Q. Must religious worship, according to the gospel, be offered to God through Jesus Christ, as mediator?

A. Yes. Col. iii. 17, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him."

Q. Are peculiar honours also, by the express appointment of God the Father, made due to Jesus Christ as mediator?

A. Yes. John v. 22, 23, "The Father hath committed all judgment to his Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Phil. ii. 9, 10, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Q. What hath Christ done, as mediator, to render him worthy of these honours?

A. 1. He hath given us a fair edition of God's natural laws.

2. He hath assured the greatest sinners of mercy and pardon, upon terms every way fit for God to offer, and for men to accept, even upon their repentance and faith in himself.

3. He hath removed all the terror and difficulty of our approaching to God, by his own appearance before God, as our intercessor, in virtue of his sacrifice.

4. He hath provided and promised a supply of all needful aid or spiritual influence.

5. He hath given us a view of immortality and the resurrection of the dead; and hath assured us of acceptance in judgment upon continued, though imperfect obedience.

PART III.

THE DUTY OF MAN TO MAN; OR THE SOCIAL VIRTUES.

SECTION I.

Q. In what one word is the whole of social duty abridged and comprehended?

A. In love. Rom. xiii. 10, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Q. In what other word is all duty to men comprehended?

A. In righteousness. Tit. ii. 12, "Teaching us to live righteously."

Q. What is the measure of love and righteousness to our neighbour?

A. "To do to others as we would be done unto," Matt. vii. 12.

Q. Who is our neighbour?

A. Any person with whom we are any way concerned. Luke x. 29—37.

SECTION II.

Q. Which is the first and principal of the social duties?

A. Justice. Deut. xvi. 20, "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow." Jer. xxii. 3, "Execute ye judgment and righteousness. Do no wrong."

Q. What is justice?

A. A virtue which disposeth us to render to every one his due; and which keepeth us from doing injury to any. Rom. xiii. 7, "Render to all their due."

Q. What hurtful and injurious actions are contrary to justice?

A. Principally these five. 1. Murder. 2. Adultery. 3. Stealing. 4. False witness. 5. Coveting what is another's.

Q. Which is the first?

A. 1. Murder. Gen ix. 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Exod. xx. 13, "Thou shalt not kill."

Q. Is this the greatest crime against man?

A. Yes, because life is the best possession. Job ii. 4, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Q. What actions, words, and thoughts, which tend to murder, are forbidden by God, as Lord of life, as supreme governor?

A. Hatred, anger, offensive words, bitterness, cursing, quarrelling, striking. 1 John iii. 15, "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." Matt. v. 22, "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."

Q. Doth justice require us not to injure the souls of others by persuading them to sin? or needlessly putting them to pain?

A. Yes. 2 Chron. xxii. 3, "She was his counsellor to do wickedly." Gen. xxvi. 35, "Esau was a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekah."

Q. Is it a sin against the soul to neglect that instruction which we are able and obliged to communicate?

A. Yes. Luke xi. 52, "Woe unto you, who take away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

Q. What is the second sin contrary to justice?

A. 2. Adultery and fornication. Heb. xiii. 4, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Q. Are these sins forbidden in the seventh command?

A. Yes. Exod xx. 14, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Q. Is chastity guarded by this command?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the bad effects of these sins?

A. 1. They contradict the design of God, in making at first one man and one woman. Matt. xix. 4, 9, "In the beginning God made them male and female."

2. They defeat the institution of marriage. Heb. xiii. 4, "Marriage is honourable with the bed undefiled."

3. They consequently defeat God's design of raising up a succession of rational creatures to serve him. Mal. ii. 15, "Wherefore one?" (why did God create but one woman for one man?) "that he might seek a godly seed."

4. They are attended with infinite evils in families. Hos. iv. 13, "For your sins your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses, adultery."

5. They expose men to everlasting destruction. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Q. Which is the third sin contrary to justice?

A. 3. Stealing.

Q. By which of the ten commandments doth God guard and secure our temporal possessions?

A. By the eighth. Exod. xx. 15, "Thou shalt not steal."

Q. What does this command forbid?

A. All unjust ways of getting what is another's; which are also forbid by the universal law of righteousness.

Q. What is stealing by fraud called?

A. Cheating or defrauding. Lev. xix. 13, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour."

Q. What is exacting our utmost right of the poor, and putting them upon a hard bargain called?

A. Oppression. Zech. vii. 13, "Oppress not the poor."

Q. May not the poor steal?

A. No. Eph. iv. 28, "Rather let him labour."

Q. What is the worst sort of theft?

A. Cheating the poor, and betraying trusts.

Q. Is keeping back wages, when due, without the parties' consent, a sort of theft?

A. Yes. Deut. xxiv. 14, 15, "At his day thou shalt give an hired servant his hire; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."

Q. Who are the great robbers, and the chief authors of injustice?

A. Unrighteous kings and conquerors; corrupt judges and magistrates, ravenous priests and usurers.

Q. What sort of usury is unjust and forbidden?

A. Such as exceeds what the law allows; or is taken from the poor; or is inconsistent with the law of equity or charity. Exod. xxii. 25, "If thou lend money to any of my people, who are poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer."

Q. Wherein consists the wickedness of theft?

A. 1. It denies God to be a disposer of the things of this world.

2. It denies his right to use his pleasure in disposing of them.

3. It is very contrary to Christian contentment and resignation.

4. It discovers a dangerous love to this world.

5. It proves a want of love to our neighbour.

6. It is attended with great mischief to society.

Q. Which is the fourth sin against justice?

A. 4. False witness.

Q. To what possession and property of our neighbour is this an immediate injury?

A. To his fame and credit.

Q. By which of the ten commands doth God guard a man's credit?

A. By the ninth. Exod. xx. 16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

Q. Is a good name a man's best possession next to life, and its necessary subsistence; and to chastity?

A. Yes. Eccl. vii. 1, "It is better than ointment." Prov. xxii. 1, "It is rather to be chosen than riches."

Q. Is it the foundation both of respect and usefulness in society?

A. Yes. Phil ii. 29, "Hold such in reputation.

Q. Should we therefore be as tender of our neighbour's good name as of our own?

A. Yes; both in courts of judgment and in common life. Tit. iii. 2, "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man."

Q. Doth a regard to truth, as well as to man, require this?

A. Yes. Exod. xxiii. 1. 7, "Thou shalt not raise a false report. Keep thee far from a false matter."

Q. What other speeches, besides open false witness, injure our neighbour's credit?

A. 1. Misrepresentations, slanders, and adding false or ill-turned circumstances to aggravate faults.

2. Exposing faults repented of and amended.

3. Reproaching a man for natural infirmities, unavoidable misfortunes, or for his religion and conscientious practices.

Q. Which is the fifth sin contrary to justice?

A. 5. Coveting what is another's.

Q. By which command are unjust and foolish desires restrained?

A. By the tenth. Exod. xx. 17, "Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Q. When are covetings, or desire of what is another's, unjust?

A. 1. When they disturb our repose, and tend to destroy our own happiness. 1 Kings xxi. 1—7, "And Ahab was displeased, and his spirit sad, because Naboth denied him his vineyard."

2. When they lead us to any unrighteous methods of procuring what is another's property, 1 Kings xxi. 9—15, "And Ahab slew Naboth to get the vineyard."

Q. Is not gratitude a branch of justice?

A. Yes.

Q. Wherein doth gratitude consist?

A. In acknowledging favours received, in praying for our benefactors, and making such acceptable returns as are in our power. Judges viii. 35, "Neither did the Israelites show kindness to the house of Gideon for the goodness he had shown to Israel." Ruth ii. 20, "Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to us."

Q. Is our inward man subject to the law of God?

A. Yes. Deut. vi. 5, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c. Rom. vii. 7, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

SECTION III.

Q. WHICH is the second social virtue, or duty of man to man?

A. Love, or charity. Luke x. 27, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." 1 Cor. xiii. 1—13, "But the greatest of these is charity."

Q. Is civility all that we owe to our neighbour?

A. No. James ii. 15, 16, "To say to the naked and destitute of food, Depart in peace, without giving, what doth it profit?"

Q. Must we love him in sincerity?

A. Yes. Rom. xii. 9, "Let love be without dissimulation." 1 John iii. 18, "In deed and in truth."

Q. Wherein doth this sincerity consist?

A. In the reality of our intentions, suitable to our professions of kindness.

Q. What vice is contrary to sincere love.

A. Hypocrisy or flattery.

Q. What is flattery?

A. To say kind and obliging things, with a design to please; but with a selfish view, Jude 16, "Having men's persons in admiration, because of advantage."

Q. When is flattery most criminal?

A. When, by appearances of friendship and honesty, we endeavour to deceive and hurt any. 2 Sam. xx. 9, 10, "And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? and then Joab smote him, and he died."

Q. What is friendship?

A. A sincere, fervent, mutual love, founded chiefly in virtue. Prov. xvii. 17, "A friend loveth at all times." James ii. 23, "Abraham was called the friend of God."

Q. With whom, therefore, should we contract friendship?

A. With the wise and good. Psalm cxix. 63, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, that keep thy precepts."

Q. Is the friendship of wicked persons dangerous?

A. Yes. Prov. xiii. 20, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Q. In which two principal points doth love and charity consist?

A. In affection, and in action.

Q. 1. What is love in affection?

A. Such a good will, or disposition of heart, as maketh us ready to afford our best assistance for promoting our neighbour's welfare. Rom. xii. 10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another."

Q. To whom is this affection chiefly due?

A. A greater degree of it is owing to relations, and to good men, than to strangers and enemies. 1 Tim. v. 4, "Let them first show piety (or kindness) at home." Gal. vi. 10, "Let us do good to all men, especially to the household of faith."

Q. What tempers destroy this affection?

A. Envy, jealousy, anger, contempt, pride, covetousness. 1 Cor. xiii. 5, "Love thinketh (designeth, willeth) no evil."

Q. (2) What is love in action?

A. 1. Doing our neighbour all the good in our power, consistent with other obligations. Gal. v. 13, "By love serve one another." Rom. xvi. 2, "Assist in whatsoever business they have need of you."

2. Commending them to the favour and blessing of God. 1 Tim. ii. 1, "I exhort that prayers and intercessions be made for all men." James v. 16, "Pray one for another."

Q. Which are the principal kinds of charity?

A. Charity in doing good; in forgiving injuries; and in judging and speaking of persons and things.

Q. 1. What is charity in doing good called?

A. Liberality. Isa. xxxii. 8, "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things."

Q. Wherein doth this virtue consist?

A. In a wise, just, moderate temper of mind about getting, keeping, and spending money.

Q. What temper is required in getting money?

A. Prudent forecast and diligence. Prov. xxxi. 13—27, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Q. What temper is forbidden?

A. Both eager scraping and idle carelessness. Prov. xxvii. 29, "Whoso hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent." Ch. xviii. 9, "The slothful in work is brother to a great waster."

Q. What temper is required in keeping money?

A. Frugality. John vi. 12, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

Q. What temper is forbidden?

A. 1. Penuriousness. Prov. xi. 24, "Withholding more than is meet."

2. Squandering. Luke xv. 13, "The prodigal son wasted his substance with riotous living."

Q. What temper is required in spending money?

A. 1. As to the public; generosity, in opposition to sordidness. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, "The rich must be rich in good works." Exod. xxxvi. 5, "The people bring much more than enough."

2. As to ministers; just maintenance, and rewards of diligence, in opposition to narrowness of spirit. Luke x. 7, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." 1 Cor. ix. 1—14, "So hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel live of the gospel."

3. As to the poor; almsgiving, in opposition to churlishness. 1 Tim. vi. 18, "Ready to distribute, willing to communicate." 2 Cor. ix. 7, "For God loveth a cheerful giver."

4. As to strangers; especially saints and such as are banished for religion, hospitality; in opposition to selfishness, and indifference in religion. Heb. xiii. 2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." 1 Pet. iv. 9, "Use hospitality."

Q. What is the true fountain of Christian charity and kindness to the poor?

A. 1. Compassion or pity. 1 Pet. iii. 8, "Have compassion one of another." Matt. v. 7, "The merciful shall obtain mercy."

2. Love to God and Christ. 1 John v. 2, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." 2 Cor. viii. 9, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Q. What are the true and genuine effects of Christian compassion to the poor?

A. 1. Inquiries after distressed cases. Psalm xli. 4, "Blessed is he who considereth the poor."

2. Viewing them with tenderness. Job. xxx. 25, "Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" Luke x. 33, "And when the Samaritan saw the wounded Jew, he had compassion upon him."

3. Ministering to them what they want; meat, drink, physic, clothing, fuel, liberty. James ii. 15, 16, "Give them those things that are needful for the body."

4. Contriving our expenses so that we may have to give to him who needeth. Psalm cxii. 5, "He guideth his affairs with discretion."

5. Being well pleased with opportunities of doing good; and with applications of friends to that end. Rom. xii. 8, "Show mercy with cheerfulness."

6. Perseverance in well doing. Psalm xxxvii. 26, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth."

Q. What ought to be our chief encouragement to this charity?

A. Hope of divine and eternal rewards. Matt. vi. 4, "Thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly. Luke xiv. 14, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Q. II. What is the next branch of charity?

A. Forgiving injuries.

Q. What doth this carry in it?

A. 1. That we study no revenge. Zech. viii. 17, "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour." Rom. xii. 19, "Avenge not yourselves."

2 That we wish no ill to those who have hurt us. Rom. xii. 14, "Bless, and curse not."

3. That we seek peace and reconciliation. Matt. v. 24, "Go thy way, be reconciled to thy brother."

4. That we do good for evil. Matt. v. 44, "Do good to them who hate you."

Q. What doth love to enemies oblige us to?

A. 1. To give good words for bad ones. 1 Pet. iii. 9, "Not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing."

2. To return good actions for bad ones. Exod. xxiii. 4, "If thine enemy's ox or ass go astray, thou shalt bring it back." Prov. xxv. 21, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him."

3. To persevere in this practice. Rom. xii. 21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Q. What doth prudence direct as to wicked enemies?

A. To avoid familiarity and friendship with them. Prov. xiv. 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man." Prov. xxii. 24, 25, "Make no friendship with an angry man, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul."

Q. III. What is the third branch of charity?

A. Charity in judging and speaking of persons and things.

Q. What is this called?

A. Candour.

Q. Wherein doth candour consist?

A. In making due allowances for the infirmities of others, and putting the best construction upon things where there is not evident reason to do otherwise.

Q. To what conduct will charity lead us, as to the sins and faults of others?

A. 1. To prevent sins as far as we are able. Lev. xix. 17, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbour."

2. To excuse for them, as far as it is just. Luke xxiii. 34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

3. To counsel and exhort the sinner. Gal. vi. 1, "If one be overtaken with a fault, restore him." Heb. iii. 13, "Exhort one another, lest any be hardened."

4. To endure and wait long before we give up a sinner. Col. iii. 12, 13, "Put on bowels of long-suffering, forbearing one another." Rom. ix. 22, "God endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath."

5. To suppress resentment of personal offences. Col. iii. 13, "If any have a quarrel against another, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

6. To comfort such as are humbled for their sins. 2 Cor. ii. 7, "Comfort him, lest he be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow."

7. To avoid exposing faults without need. Matt. i. 19, "He would not make her a public example." 1 Pet. iv. 8, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

8. To check tale-bearers. Psalm ci. 5, "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off."

9. Never to reflect on a party for the faults of a person; or impute one man's crimes to another. John vii. 24, "Judge righteous judgment."

10. To pray for the pardon and conversion of sinners. Rom. x. 1, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they might be saved."

Q. Which are the two chief branches of candour?

A. Candour in judging, and in speaking.

Q. As to candour in judging; what vice is opposite to it?

A. Censoriousnes, or rash judgment."

Q. How may rash judgment be avoided?

A. By care never to judge through passion, suspicion, report, or in haste. John vii. 5, "Judge not according to appearance." 1 Cor. iv. 5, "Judge nothing before the time."

Q. In what matters should candour of judgment be especially employed?

A. About men's different opinions and practices in religion.

Rom. xiv. 10, "Why dost thou judge, or set at nought, thy brother?"

Q. Upon what accounts should great and fair allowances be made?

A. On the account of different capacities, education, and the different impression of divine objects on the mind. 1 Cor. xii. 12, "The members of the body differ."

Q. Ought we not to believe those sincere and honest who profess to be so, unless we can prove they are not?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. xiii. 7, "Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things."

Q. Whose province is it to judge of men's hearts?

A. God's. Rom. xiv. 4, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth."

Q. Should not we then fear to invade his province?

A. Yes. Matt. vii. 1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Q. That men should be all of one opinion in religious matters, is it not impossible?

A. Yes.

Q. And to profess to be so, when they are not, is it not hypocrisy?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any other means of union, then, among Christians, but mutual forbearance and charity?

A. No. Eph. iv. 2, 3, "Forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Q. II. As to candour in speaking; what qualifications should our speech have; especially when we speak of persons and characters?

A. 1. It should be deliberate and serious. Prov. xviii. 13, "To answer a matter before it is heard is folly and shame to a man."

Q. What vice is opposite to this quality?

A. Talkativeness; rash and idle words. Prov. x. 19, "In the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin."

2. It should be agreeable to our thoughts. Psalm xv. 2, "He speaketh the truth in his heart."

Q. What vice is opposite to this property?

A. Lying and dissimulation.

3. It should be honest and friendly, tending to better our neighbour. Eph. iv. 29, "Speak what is good, to the use of edifying."

Q. What vice is opposite to this?

A. Flattery.

4. It should be pleasant and grateful. Col. iv. 6, "Let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt."

Q. What vice is opposite to this?

A. Scurrility. 1 Sam. xxv. 14, "And Nabal railed on David and his men."

Q. On the other hand, what sort of speeches should a Christian endeavour to avoid and suppress?

A. 1. Such as tend to make our neighbour criminal, as slander, backbiting. Psalm xv. 3, "He backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour."

2. Such as tend to make him infamous, as upbraidings, reproaches, &c. Matt. v. 22, "Whoso shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

3. Such as tend to make him odious, as reviling, telling, and aggravating his faults. 1 Pet. ii. 23, "Christ, when reviled, reviled not again."

4. Such as tend to make him appear ridiculous, as mocking, indecent banter. Gen. xxi. 9, "Ishmael mocked Isaac." Luke viii. 53, "And they laughed Jesus to scorn."

Q. How may we attain to, and improve in, benevolent dispositions?

A. By prayer. 1 Thess. iv. 9, iii. 12, "Ye are taught of God to love one another. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and to all men."

SECTION IV.

Q. Which is the third social virtue, or duty of man to man?

A. Honour and respect. Rom. xii. 10, "In honour preferring one another." 1 Pet. ii. 17, "Honour all men."

Q. What doth this import?

A. A disposition to acknowledge, by all fit words and actions, whatever excellency or superiority is in another.

Q. Is this required by the fifth command?

A. Yes. Exod. xx. 12, "Honour thy father and mother."

Q. Is this virtue necessary, as we are members of society?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. xii. 18, "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

Q. Doth this include courteousness and good manners?

A. Yes. Matt. x. 12, "When ye come into any house, salute it."

Q. Is courteousness a Christian virtue?

A. Yes. 1 Pet. iii. 8, "Be courteous."

Q. What is courteousness?

A. Friendliness and easiness in our conversation, with a care not to offend, but rather, by all honest ways, to please those we converse with. Phil. ii. 3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Q. As this virtue is a stooping upon occasion from our superiority, what is it called?

A. Condescension. Rom. xii. 16, "Condescend to men of low estate."

Q. As this virtue respects inferiors in place, gifts, wealth, &c., what is it called?

A. Affability. 1 Pet. v. 5, "All of you be subject one to another. 1 Cor. xii. 21, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."

Q. What are the opposites of affability?

A. 1. On the one hand, fawning. Job xxxii. 21, "Let me not accept any man's person, nor give flattering titles unto men."

2. On the other hand, moroseness, sourness, or perverseness. Prov. iv. 24, "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee."

Q. Should gravity always accompany courteousness and affability?

A. Yes.

Q. What is this virtue?

A. Observing a due decorum in all our carriage. 1 Cor. xiii. 5, "Not behaving unseemly." Phil. iv. 8, "Whatever things are honest (or grave), think on these things."

Q. What vice is opposite to gravity?

A. Levity; or being so much engaged by trifles as to be insensible to what is important, and negligent of what we owe to others; also affectation, or a false humility.

Q. Is not peculiar honour and respect due to good men, whatever their condition be?

A. Yes. Psalm xv. 4, "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." Psalm xvi. 3, "The saints are the excellent of the earth."

SECTION V.

Q. Which is the fourth social virtue, or duty, owing to man?

A. Peaceableness. Rom. xii. 18, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Q. What is this virtue?

A. A desire and endeavour to promote quiet and good will amongst men, and to preserve a calm and friendly temper in ourselves.

Q. What are the foundations of peace in society?

A. Justice and charity.

Q. What means are necessary to promote peace?

A. To observe and govern well our words, our actions, and the dispositions of our hearts.

Q. I. What rules must we observe as to our words?

A. 1. To abstain from all provoking words, calumnies, reproaches; rude, hot, and contentious language. 1 Cor. x. 32, "Give no offence." Prov. xv. 18, "A wrathful man stirreth up

strife." Eph. iv. 31, "Let all bitterness and clamour be put away."

2. To use wise and calm discourse. Prov. xxxi. 26, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Eph. iv. 15, "Speaking the truth in love."

Q. II. What are the rules of government as to our actions?

A. 1. That we give every person the regard due to him; and wrong no man. Rom. xiii. 7, "Render to all their due."

2. That we pass over small injuries in our reputation, property, and liberty. 1 Cor. vi. 7, "Rather take wrong than go to law one with another."

3. That we testify our love and friendship by doing our neighbour good. Gal. v. 13, "By love serve one another."

4. That we bear with persons in what is not pleasing. Prov. xxv. 8, "Go not forth hastily to strive."

5. That we meddle not as busy-bodies, undesired, in other men's affairs. 1 Thess. iv. 11, "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business."

6. That nevertheless we labour to make peace between others, and do nothing to break it. Matt. v. 9, "Blessed are the peace-makers." Prov. vi. 19, "The Lord hateth him that soweth discord among brethren."

7. That we avoid party matters, as far as we can, without sacrificing truth and holiness. Rom. xiv. 1, "Not to doubtful disputations." 2 Tim. ii. 23, "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they beget strifes."

8. That we accept of moderate and reasonable acknowledgment and reparation of wrongs. Prov. xiii. 10, "Only by pride cometh contention."

9. That we be ready to explain our words and actions; acknowledge offences, and repair injuries. Prov. xxv. 9, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour." Matt. v. 23, 24, "Go, be reconciled to thy brother."

Q. How should reconciliation be managed?

A. By calming our passions, owning our faults, making amends, yielding a little from our rights by employing a third person. Eccl. x. 4, "Yielding pacifieth great offences."

Q. III. What rules must be observed as to the disposition of our hearts?

A. 1. That we labour to root out all bad affections; as pride, partiality, covetousness, envy, and wrath. James iv. 1, "Whence come wars? From your lusts."

2. That we cherish all good affections; such as humility, meekness, patience, candour, and a catholic spirit. Phil. ii. 2, "That ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

SECTION VI.

Q. Which is the fifth social virtue, or duty owing to man?

A. Truth or veracity. Eph. iv. 25, "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."

Q. What is truth, in the moral idea of it, as used here?

A. The agreement of our words with our hearts.

Q. What is lying?

A. Giving a false representation of our minds, or speaking what we think is false, with a design to deceive and injure others.

Q. Are hyperboles, parables, fables, and ironies, lies?

A. No. For their design is to represent truth, and to instruct in duty with greater advantage. John xxi. 25, "Many other things Jesus did, which, if written, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books." 1 Kings xviii. 26, 27, "Baal is certainly a god," &c.

Q. Is all intention to deceive, when the truth is not denied nor any person injured, sinful?

A. No. Jer. xxxviii. 25—27, "Jeremiah told only a part of the truth."

Q. What is the apostle's great and comprehensive argument for speaking truth?

A. Eph. iv. 25, "That we are members one of another:" that is, members of the same body.

Q. Why doth our being members of common human society oblige us to speak truth?

A. Because mutual confidence, founded on the hope of common fidelity, is the chief link of society. Jer. ix. 4, 5. Society is dissolved when "every brother will supplant, and every neighbour walketh in lies."

Q. As we are members of Christian society, are we still more obliged to speak the truth?

A. Yes. In conformity to God, who is the God of truth: to Jesus Christ, the true witness: and to the Spirit, who is a Spirit of truth.

Q. What shall we say of that doctrine taught by the Romish church, that faith is not to be kept with heretics?

A. That it is a very wicked and horrid doctrine.

Q. What are proper means to keep us from being tempted to lying?

A. 1. To keep from crime or guilt, which may require a lie to conceal it. Acts v. 1—10, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

2. To guard against a covetous mind, which draweth many to lie for gain. Prov. xxi. 6, "To get treasure by a lying tongue is vanity, and the way to death." 2 Kings v., Gehazi is a sad instance of this.

3. To suppress ill will, malice, envy, which prompt men to false accusations. Prov. xxvi. 24, "He who hateth dissembleth with his lips."

4. To check pride, which leads many to aggravate their own virtues, good actions, or wise sayings, &c. 2 Pet. ii. 18, "They speak great swelling words of vanity." Prov. xxvii. 2, "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth."

5. To watch over a rash inconsiderate temper. James i. 26, "If any man bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain."

6. To keep up a stated fear of God. Isa. lvii. 11, "Of whom hast thou been afraid, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me?"

7. To attend to the odiousness, enormity, and danger of lying, and to the punishment of liars. Prov. xii. 22, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." John viii. 44, "Liars are of their father, the devil." Rev. xxi. 8, "They shall have their part in the lake of fire."

8. To pray that God would keep us from this detestable vice. Ps. cxli. 3, cxix. 29, "Lord, keep the door of my lips. Remove from me the way of lying."

SECTION VII.

Q. Which is the sixth social virtue, or duty owing to man?

A. Edification. 1 Thess. v. 11, "Edify one another."

Q. What do you understand by this word?

A. Labouring to make others wise and good, useful and happy.

Q. How is this to be done?

A. 1. By instructing the ignorant with compassion. Heb. v. 1, 2, "To have compassion on the ignorant." 2 Tim. ii. 25, "In meekness instructing those that know not the truth."

2. By exhorting to duty, warning of danger, and advising to true interest. Heb. iii. 13, "Exhort one another daily." 1 Thess. v. 14, "Warn the unruly." 2 Cor. v. 11, "We persuade men."

3. By reproving (not scorners, but) such as will take it, and are like to be better by it. Prov. ix. 8, "Rebuke not a scorner, but a wise man."

4. By inoffensiveness, no way tempting others to sin. Rom. xiv. 13, "Let no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way." Hab. ii. 15, "Woe unto him that putteth his bottle to his neighbour, and maketh him drunk."

5. By setting a good example. Phil. ii. 15, 16, "Shine as lights in the midst of a perverse generation, holding forth the word of life."

Q. How should they be qualified who desire to edify others?

A. 1. With scripture knowledge. Rom. xv. 14, "Filled with knowledge, able to admonish others."

2. With wisdom and prudence. Prov. xv. 23, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

3. With a serious, tender spirit. 1 Thess. ii. 11, "We exhorted and charged you, as a father doth his children."

4. With courage. Psalm cxix. 46, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

5. With a good life. Rom. ii. 21, "Thou who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

Q. Is not the blessing of God necessary to render such attempts successful?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. iii. 7, "Neither is he that planteth, nor he that watereth, any thing, but God that giveth the increase."

Q. Should not that blessing be sought by prayer?

A. Yes. 2 Thess. iii. 1, "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may be glorified."

SECTION VIII.

Q. Which is the seventh social virtue, or class of duty owing to man?

A. Relative virtue and duty.

Q. What mean you by this?

A. Such duties as arise from the natural and voluntary relations we bear to each other.

Q. Who are superiors?

A. Those above us; as magistrates, ministers, husbands, masters, parents.

Q. What is the general duty of superiors?

A. Wise and just government, attended with courtesy and condescension. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, "He who ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Rom. xii. 16, "Condescend to men of low estate."

Q. Who are inferiors?

A. Those below us; as subjects, Christian churches, wives, servants, children.

Q. What is the general duty of inferiors?

A. Respect and modest submission. Lev. xix. 32, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head." 1 Pet. v. 5, "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." Rom. xiii. 1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."

Q. I. Which is the first relation in natural society?

A. That between husband and wife.

Q. What duties do husband and wife mutually owe to each other?

A. Love and faithfulness. Gen. ii. 23, 24, "They shall be one flesh." Matt. xix. 5, 6, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Q. What doth love import?

A. A constant concern to evidence and strengthen their

mutual affection, and to promote the comfort and welfare of each other. Eph. v. 33, "Let every man love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Q. Should not this love lead them especially to promote the salvation of each other?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. vii. 16, "How knowest thou, O man, or wife, but thou mayest save thy companion?" 1 Pet. iii. 7, "Heirs together of the grace of God, that your prayers be not hindered."

Q. What doth faithfulness import?

A. That all thoughts of a rival with a wife or husband be utterly expelled. Mal. ii. 15, "Let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth." Prov. ii. 17, "The strange woman forgetteth the covenant of her God."

Q. II. Which is the next relation in society?

A. That between parents and children.

Q. What duty is owing from parents to children?

A. 1. Care of their bodies; to render them healthful and acceptable to the world, and to put them in a way to support themselves. 1 Tim. v. 8, "If any man provide not for his own house, he is worse than an infidel."

2. Care of their souls. Eph. vi. 4, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Q. How is the care of their souls to be expressed?

A. 1. By instruction, with wisdom and diligence. Deut. vi. 6, 7, "These things shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

2. By being examples of every virtue. Psalm ci. 2, "I will behave myself wisely, and walk within my house with a perfect heart."

3. By encouraging all good beginnings. Col. iii. 21, "Lest they be discouraged."

4. By maintaining their authority over them. 1 Tim. iii. 4, "Who ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Prov. xxix. 15, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

5. By correction, without passion, and with moderation, justice, and tenderness. Prov. xix. 18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, but be not transported to cause him to die." * Eph. vi. 4, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."

6. By daily and fervent prayers for them. Gen. xvii. 18, "And Abraham said, Oh that Ishmael may live before thee!" 1 Chron. xxix. 19, "O Lord, give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments."

Q. What duty is owing from children to parents?

A. Honour. Exod. xx. 12, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

* See the original and margin.

Q. What acts of duty doth honour include?

A. Respect, love, obedience, assistance.

Q. (1.) In what doth respect consist?

A. In acknowledging their authority, in thoughts of esteem, in fear of their displeasure, and desire of their approbation. Lev. xix. 3, "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father."

Q. How is children's respect for parents to be expressed?

A. 1. In humble and modest words and actions. 1 Kings ii. 19, "Solomon rose up to meet his mother, and bowed himself unto her, and set her on his right hand."

2. In teachableness. Prov. i. 8, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

3. In bearing with and covering their faults. Gen. ix. 23, "Shem and Japheth went backwards, and covered their father's nakedness."

4. In asking their advice and prayers. Gen. xxvii. 34, "Bless me also, O my father."

5. In taking well their reproofs. Prov. xiii. 1, "A scorner heareth not rebuke."

6. In submitting to correction. Heb. xii. 9, "The fathers of our flesh corrected us, and we gave them reverence."

7. In care of their welfare. John xix. 26, 27, "When Jesus saw his mother, and John standing by, he saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then said he to John, Behold thy mother. And from that hour John took her to his own home."

Q. (2.) What sort of love is due to parents?

A. 1. Love of gratitude. 1 Tim. v. 4, "Let children learn first to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God."

2. Delight in their company. Ruth i. 16, "Ruth said to her mother, Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge."

3. Tenderness of them in sickness and old age. 1 Sam. xxii. 3, "And David brought his father and mother to the king of Moab for safety."

Q. What are the true and proper grounds of this love in children?

A. The past kindness and visible friendship of their parents, and their own dependence upon them. 2 Cor. xii. 14, "Parents ought to lay up for their children." Prov. xxxi. 28, "Her children arise up and call her blessed."

Q. (3.) How should the obedience of children be qualified?

A. 1. It should be inward and religious. Eph. vi. 1, "Obey your parents in the Lord."

2. It should be cheerful and ready. Luke ii. 51, "And Jesus was subject to his parents."

3. It should be, while incapable of judging for themselves,

constant and universal. Col. iii. 20, "Children, obey your parents in all things."

Q. (4.) How should assistance be given to parents?

A. 1. By vindicating their character. Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father." Luke vii. 35, "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

2. By comforting their minds. Prov. xxiii. 24, "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice."

3. By supporting their bodies. Gen. xlvii. 12, "Joseph nourished his father."

Q. What promises belong to such children?

A. Eph. vi. 2, "That it shall go well with them." Col. iii. 20, "For it is well pleasing to God."

Q. What threatenings stand against undutiful children?

A. Deut. xxvii. 16, "Cursed be he who setteth light by father and mother." Prov. xxx. 17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Q. III. Between whom does the third relation in society subsist?

A. Between masters or mistresses and servants.

Q. What duty do masters owe to their servants?

A. Justice and equity.

Q. What justice is due to them?

A. Treating them according to agreement.

Q. What doth equity require?

A. That they be treated according to reason; as goodness, mercy, and humanity require. Col. iv. 1, "Masters, give unto your servants what is just and equal." Eph. vi. 9, "Forbearing threatening."

Q. What do justice and equity particularly require?

A. 1. Sufficient wages, diet, fuel, rest, for their bodies. Lev. xxv. 46, "Ye shall not rule over one another with rigour." Jer. xxii. 13, "Woe to him that useth his neighbour's service without wages!"

2. Instruction, time for improvement, and other helps, for their souls. Gen. xviii. 19, "Abraham will command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord." Deut. v. 14, "That on the sabbath thy man-servant and maid-servant may rest as well as thou."

Q. By what great motives should masters be influenced in their treatment of servants?

A. By this. Col. iv. 1; Eph. vi. 9, "That they also have a master in heaven."

Q. What duties do servants owe their masters?

A. 1. Obedience in all things lawful. Eph. vi. 5, "Servants, obey in all things your masters."

2. Faithfulness; or a care to promote their masters' whole interest. Tit. ii. 10, "Not purloining, or stealing, but showing all good fidelity."

3. A submissive, respectful behaviour. Eph. vi. 5, "Servants, be obedient, with fear and trembling." Tit. ii. 9, "Not answering again."

4. A prevailing regard to the authority of God in all they do. Eph. vi. 7, "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and to men."

Q. What will be the reward of faithful servants?

A. A future "eternal inheritance, if herein they serve the Lord Christ," Col. iii. 24.

Q. IV. What is the fourth relation between men and men?

A. That of magistrates and subjects.

Q. What are the duties of magistrates?

A. 1. To be as gods (that is, wise, just, and good governors) to their subjects; every way consulting their good. Ps. lxxxii. 1, "God judgeth among the gods." 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, "Ruling in the fear of God."

2. To choose the best officers, and to inspect their behaviour. Ps. ci. 6, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may serve me." Prov. xxix. 2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice."

Q. What is the duty of subjects?

A. 1. To honour the authority of magistrates, as ministers of God. 1 Pet. ii. 17, "Honour the king." Rom. xiii. 4, "He is a minister of God to thee for good."

2. To show respect to their persons. Job xxxiv. 18, "It is not fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked."

3. To submit to their laws, if not inconsistent with duty to the highest lawgiver. Tit. iii. 1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates."

4. To fear their power. Rom. xiii. 3, "Be afraid of the power." Prov. xxiv. 21, "Fear thou the king."

5. To support their government. Matt. xxii. 21, "Render unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's."

6. To love them as public benefactors. 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, "And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for king Josiah."

7. To pray for their prosperity, and that they may wisely and faithfully answer the ends of their office. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, "I exhort that prayers be made for kings and all in authority," &c.

Q. V. What is the fifth great relation in society?

A. That between Christian ministers and Christian churches.

Q. What is the duty of Christian ministers?

A. 1. To prepare for all their work, public and private. 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15, "Give attendance to reading. Meditate on these things." 2 Chron. xxix. 11, "And Hezekiah said to the Levites, My sons, be not now negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to serve him."

2. To instruct and persuade with all condescension, judgment, and skill; to admonish with meekness, and to pray with under-

standing and affection. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25, "Apt to teach; in meekness instructing." Acts vi. 4, "We will give ourselves unto prayer."

3. To be peculiarly diligent and tender in the instruction of youth. John xxi. 15, "Jesus saith to Peter, Feed my lambs."

4. To be examples to the flock. 1 Tim. iv. 12, "In word, conversation, charity, spirit, faith, and purity."

5. To devote themselves, heart and life, to their work. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16, "Give thyself wholly to them: continue in them."

Q. What are the duties of a Christian people towards their ministers?

A. 1. Esteem, as to ministers of God in sacred things, and men of superior talents. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13, "Esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake."

2. Encouraging them in freely proposing what they apprehend important truths; hearing them without prejudice, and esteeming them for their diligence and fidelity. Acts xvii. 11, "The Bereans received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

3. Consulting them in cases in which conscience is concerned. Hag. ii. 11, "Ask the priests concerning the law."

4. Readiness to receive and obey their instructions. John xiii. 20, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me." Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves."

5. Cheerful support, suited to their stations, and faithful diligence. Gal. vi. 6, "Let him who is taught communicate to him that teacheth." 1 Cor. ix.; 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders, who rule well, be counted worthy of double honour (or wages); especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

6. Frequent and earnest prayers for them. 1 Thess. v. 25, "Brethren, pray for us." Rom. xv. 30, "Strive together in your prayers to God for me."

PART IV.

THE DUTY OF MAN TO HIMSELF; OR THE PERSONAL VIRTUES.

SECTION I.

Q. WHAT is the general duty every man oweth to himself, or the first principle in nature?

A. To endeavour to be happy. Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate." Prov. ix. 12, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself."

Q. What is necessary in order to be happy?

A. 1. That we have a true idea or notion of happiness, and

of the means to obtain it. Prov. iv. 7, "Get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding."

2. That we earnestly seek happiness in the use of these means. Matt. vi. 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Q. Wherein doth true happiness consist?

A. In freedom from pain; and the possession of true, great, and lasting pleasure.

Q. Whence must this happiness arise?

A. From our union with God; that is, loving God, as our chief good, and enjoying his favour. Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee; thou art my portion for ever."

Q. What is the chief hindrance to this happiness?

A. The union of our hearts with this world; or our choosing a bodily and earthly happiness. 1 John ii. 15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

SECTION II.

Q. WHICH is the first personal virtue; or the first duty of man, considered by himself?

A. Self-edification, or the care of a man's own mind. Jude 20, "Build up yourselves." John vi. 27, "Labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life."

Q. Which are the two chief branches of this self-edification?

A. 1. The knowledge of ourselves, or self-acquaintance. Ps. cxix. 59, "I thought on my ways." 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Know ye not your own selves?"

2. Improving ourselves by truth, and goodness. 1 Cor. xiv. 20, "Be not children in understanding, but men." 2 Pet. iii. 18, "Grow in grace."

Q. By what means are we thus to edify ourselves?

A. 1. By reading. Luke x. 26, "How readest thou?" 1 Tim. iv. 13, "Give attendance to reading." Job viii. 8, "Inquire of the former age."

2. By consideration. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16, "Meditate upon these things." 2 Tim. ii. 7, "Consider what I say."

3. By hearing. Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing." Matt. vii. 24, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man," &c.

Q. Which are the most worthy objects of that knowledge which is thus to be gained?

A. God, Christ, ourselves, good and evil, the works of God in creation, and providence, and the bible.

Q. Which is the next means of self-improvement?

A. 4. Watchfulness; or a due attention to improve every spiritual advantage, and to avoid every kind of error and evil.

1 Thess. v. 5, 6, "Let us watch and be sober, as children of the day." 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant."

Q. Which are the parts of watchfulness?

A. (1.) A care what we read, and whom we statedly hear, and to attend to evidence. Mark iv. 24, "Take heed what you hear." 1 John iv. 1, "Believe not every spirit." 1 Thess. v. 21, "Prove all things."

(2.) A care how we walk. Eph. v. 15, "Walk circumspectly." Ch. vi. 11, "Put on armour."

Q. Which is the fifth means of self-improvement?

A. 5. Good company and discourse. Ps. cxix. 63, "I am a companion of all them who fear thee." Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."

6. Following good examples. Eph. v. 1, "Be imitators of God. 1 Pet. ii. 21, "Christ left us an example." James v. 10, "Take the prophets for an example." Heb. vi. 12, "That ye be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

7. Prayer to God. James i. 5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." Acts xx. 32, "He is able to build you up."

SECTION III.

Q. Which is the second personal virtue or duty?

A. Humility or modesty of mind. 1 Pet. v. 5, "Be ye clothed with humility."

Q. Wherein doth this virtue consist?

A. In putting no higher value on ourselves and our merits than we ought; and behaving suitably to a sober judgment. Rom. xii. 3, "Not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think." Ps. cxxxi. 1, 2, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; I have behaved as a weaned child."

Q. Doth this virtue govern all our desires after respect, fame, praise, glory?

A. Yes. Gal. v. 26, "Be not desirous of vain-glory." 3 John 9, "Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence."

Q. Doth it direct all our carriage to God and man?

A. Yes. Mic. vi. 8, "It is good to walk humbly with thy God." 1 Cor. iv. 7, "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou, that thou hast not received? why then dost thou glory?"

Q. What particulars doth it comprehend?

A. 1. A modest opinion of our persons, our improvements in knowledge, our goodness, and our temporal possessions. Luke xviii. 9, "Not trusting we are righteous, and despising others." 2 Cor. x. 14, "Stretch not yourselves beyond your measure."

2. Not exalting ourselves above other men, nor despising them, and being able to suffer contempt with patience. Isa.

lxv. 5, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." Prov. xi. 12, "He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour." Esth. iii. 5, 6, "Haman thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone."

3. Living prudently, acting decently, and, as far as we may, declining state, show, and distinction. Jer. xlv. 5, "Seek not great things for thyself." Ch. ix. 23, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the rich man in his riches," &c.

4. A deep conviction of our own ignorance, weakness, and guilt, producing a dependence on the assistance of God's Spirit, and the mediation of his Son. 2 Cor. iii. 5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Phil. iii. 3, "Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Q. What vice is contrary to humility?

A. Pride. James iv. 6, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Q. What is spiritual pride?

A. 1. Being lifted up with a conceit of some extraordinary virtues we think ourselves possessed of; by which men are betrayed into sin. As in the instances of Uzziah and Hezekiah. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, xxxii. 25; 1 Cor. viii. 1, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

2. Vain glory, on account of some laudable actions. Matt. vi. 2, "When thou givest alms, sound not a trumpet."

3. A confident justifying ourselves. Luke xviii. 11, "The Pharisee stood and said, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men."

Q. What considerations are fitted to prevent pride?

A. 1. Its natural ill consequences and effects. Prov. xxv. 27, "For men to search their own glory is not glory." Ch. xxvi. 12, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

2. It is hateful to God, forbidden and threatened by him. Prov. xvi. 5, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Mal. iv. 1, "The proud shall be burnt up as stubble, saith the Lord of hosts."

3. Humility is in a peculiar manner recommended by Christ. Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Luke xviii. 14, "Jesus often said, He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

4. Humility is necessary to the exercise of all other duties, in every station and relation of life. Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" John xiii. 4—17, "Ye ought to wash one another's feet." 1 Cor. xii. 21, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."

5. Humility is a virtue wherein Jesus Christ is our pattern. Matt. xi. 29, "Learn of me, for I am lowly in heart." Phil. ii.

5, "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus."

Q. What rules are given us as to apparel?

A. Plainness and modesty are recommended. 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, "Let women adorn themselves in modest apparel, and with good works.

Q. What is contrary to this, and to be avoided?

A. 1. Richness of dress. 1 Tim. ii. 9, "Not with gold, pearls, and costly array."

2. Levity and wantonness of dress. Prov. vii. 10, "The attire of a harlot." 1 Pet. iii. 1—5.

Q. What are the ill effects of luxury, especially in apparel?

A. 1. It makes the body too much our care. Matt. vi. 25, "Take no thought what ye shall eat, drink, and put on."

2. It hinders charity and doing good. Luke xvi. 19, "The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously," but neglected Lazarus.

3. It introduceth idleness, impurity, and justice. Ezek. xvi. 49, "This was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her and her daughters."

4. It maketh us busy about trifles, and is a sinful waste of time. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4, "Not plaiting hair, putting on of apparel, but adorning the hidden man of the heart."

SECTION IV.

Q. WHICH is the third personal virtue, or personal duty?

A. Meekness. Col. iii. 12, "Put on meekness."

Q. What is meekness?

A. A virtue by the exercise of which we keep all our angry and revengeful passions within the bounds of reason and religion, under all provocations.

Q. How will meekness towards man discover itself?

A. 1. By calmness of mind and gentleness of behaviour, under affronts and ill usage. 1 Cor. xiii. 5, "Charity is not easily provoked." Ch. iv. 12, 13, "Being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat."

2. By a care to avoid offence. Tit. iii. 2, "Be gentle, showing all meekness to all men." 1 Cor. x. 32, "Give no offence to Jews nor gentiles, nor the church of God."

3. By suiting our spirit and actions to our condition, relations, and circumstances. 1 Pet. iii. 4, "A meek and quiet spirit adorns every inferior station.

4. By moderation in matters of religion. James i. 20, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Q. What vices are contrary to meekness?

A. Fierceness, rash anger, hatred, and malice. James i. 19, "Be slow to wrath." Eph. iv. 31, "Let all bitterness, wrath, and malice, be put away."

Q. Will this virtue influence men in their behaviour to the brutes also?

A. Yes. Prov. xii. 10, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

Q. What are the proper means to obtain a meek temper?

A. 1. To guard our spirits, and resolve to think before we suffer anger to break out. Prov. iv. 3, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Ch. xxv. 28, "He who hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls."

2. To lessen our value for ourselves, and for this world. Prov. xiii. 10, "By pride cometh contention." Judg. xvii. 2, "Micah's mother cursed" about the money.

3. To consider how often we have offended, and how frail we still are. Gal. vi. 1, "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

4. To attend to what indecencies and follies are produced by passion. Prov. xiv. 17, "He who is soon angry dealeth foolishly." Ch. xxix. 22, "A furious man aboundeth in transgression."

5. To ponder the examples of Moses, of Jesus Christ, and of our wiser neighbours. Numb. xii. 3, "Moses was above all men very meek." Matt. xi. 29, "Learn of me, for I am meek."

6. To pray for the assistance of the Spirit. Zeph. ii. 3, "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth; seek meekness." Gal. v. 23, "The fruit of the spirit is meekness."

SECTION V.

Q. Which is the fourth personal virtue, or duty?

A. Contentment, or self-possession. Phil. iv. 11, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Luke xxi. 19, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

Q. What is contentment?

A. A virtue which moderates our desires and cares about worldly possessions, and which giveth us composure, whatever our outward condition be. Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have."

Q. What vices are contrary to this temper?

A. In general discontent; particularly envy and covetousness.

Q. Wherein lieth the folly and mischief of discontent and envy?

A. 1. They are an affront to God, and must lose his favour. Rom. ix. 20. It is saying, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Isa. xlv. 9, "Woe to him that striveth with his maker."

2. They discompose the mind, injure the health, increase our burdens, and unfit us for wise endeavours to mend our circumstances. Prov. xiv. 30, "Envy is the rottenness of the bones." 1. Tim. vi. 10, 11, "They pierce themselves through with many sorrows."

3. They hinder the enjoyment of every blessing. Esth. v. 13, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai at the king's gate."

4. They occasion many other sins. 1 Tim. vi. 9, "They who will be rich fall into many snares."

5. They are disparagement to our Christian profession. Luke xii. 30, "These things the nations of the world seek after"

6. They render us troublesome and disagreeable in our stations. Prov. xv. 27, "He who is greedy of gain troubleth his own house."

Q. What is covetousness?

A. An inordinate love of riches; or, a fondness for the things of this world. Luke xii. 15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness."

Q. What are the chief marks of it?

A. 1. Eager desires to be rich. Col. iii. 2, 5, "Set not your affections on things on the earth. Mortify covetousness, which is idolatry."

2. Anxious cares to heap up wealth. Prov. xxiii. 4, "Labour not to be rich." Matt. vi. 19, "Lay not up treasures on earth."

3. Unrighteous methods to obtain it. Prov. xxviii. 20, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."

4. Not using riches. Luke xii. 16, 21, laying up in great barns, but not being rich towards God. Eccl. vi. 2, "Who hath no power to eat of his riches."

Q. Why is love to the world so sinful?

A. 1. It destroys love to God. Matt. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters, God and mammon." 1 John ii. 15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

2. It destroys love to man. 1 Sam. xxv. 14, covetous Nabal was churlish and evil in his doings, and railed on David.

3. It is the source of many other sins. 1 Tim. vi. 10, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

4. It exposeth men to the displeasure of God and future misery. Hab. ii. 9, "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness." 1 Cor. vi. 10, "The covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Q. What will produce a contented temper?

A. 1. Submission to God and trust in him; with a sense of our own unworthiness. Heb. xiii. 5, "Be content; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Lam. iii. 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain for the punishment of his sins?"

2. Prayer. Prov. xxx. 8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Psalm cxix. 36, "Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness."

SECTION VI.

HAVING considered the four principal virtues which regard the mind; and are necessary to the right use and government of our reasonable powers, viz. Self-edification, humility, meekness, and contentment: let me now inquire,

Q. What is the general duty of every man, with regard to the body?

A. To guard its life and health, that it may be capable of those services and enjoyments for which God designed it. Eph. v. 29, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Matt. x. 23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."

Q. Is not self-murder a very heinous sin, and expressly forbidden by the great Lord of life?

A. Yes. Gen. ix. 5, "Surely your blood of your lives will I require." 1 John iii. 15, "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Q. Which are the four principal virtues or duties, which respect living soberly, or the right government of our bodies?

A. Temperance, purity, or chastity, diligence, and self-denial, or mortification.

Q. Which is the first personal virtue?

A. Temperance. 2 Pet. i. 6, "Add to knowledge temperance."

Q. What is temperance?

A. A virtue which enables us to use moderation in all bodily supports and enjoyments, and preserves us from all sinful excesses.

Q. When may we be said to be guilty of intemperance in meats and drinks?

A. When we eat or drink so much as is hurtful to the body, or disorders the mind, and unfits us for our duty.

Q. What are the best arguments against intemperance in meats and drinks?

A. 1. It tends to brutishness, sickness, poverty, quarrelling, injustice. Prov. xx. 1, "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging." Ch. xxiii. 21, "The glutton and the drunkard shall come to poverty," v. 29—35, "Who hath woe, contentions, babbling, wounds? They who tarry long at the wine. At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

2. It is an ungrateful abuse of God's goodness. Deut. viii. 10, 11; 1 Tim. vi. 17, "Lest thou eat and be full and forget God; who giveth us all things richly to enjoy."

3. It unfits for watching, prayer, and every Christian duty. Hos. iv. 11; Prov. xxxi. 5, "Wine takes away the heart, and makes us forget God's law."

4. It puts us into the worst posture for death and judgment.

Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares."

5. It hath terrible threatenings in God's word. Isa. v. 11, 22, "Woe to them that follow strong drink. Woe to them that are mighty to drink wine." Phil. iii. 19, "Their end is destruction, whose God is their belly." Gal. v. 21, "They shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Q. With what cautions may we use recreations and mirth?

A. 1. If we set not our hearts upon them. Eccl. vii. 4, "The heart of fools is in the house of mirth."

2. If we be not too often at them, nor too long about them. Job xxi. 13, some "spend their days in mirth."

3. If we abstain from them, when they would occasion sin, or neglect of duty, or offend the wise and good. Ezek. xxi. 10, "Should we then make mirth?" Isa. xxii. 12, 13, "The Lord called to weeping and mourning, and behold joy and feasting." Prov. xiv. 13, "The end of such mirth is heaviness."

Q. What irregularities and vices of this kind do the scriptures forbid?

A. Love of pleasure, a sensual mind, sloth, excess of sleep, and play. Rom. xiii. 14, "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts." Prov. xx. 13, "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty." 1 Tim. v. 6, "She who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

Q. What are the usual attendants and consequences of gaming?

A. A wrong turn of understanding; a vain or profane heart; quarrels; pride, extravagance, if successful; anger, sullenness, robbery, and sometimes self-murder, if unsuccessful.

SECTION VII.

Q. Which is the second personal virtue, or duty, as to the conduct of the body?

A. Purity and chastity. Matt. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart." 1 Pet. ii. 11, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

Q. What is purity?

A. That virtue by which we endeavour to preserve our minds from all impure thoughts; our tongues from all indecent speeches; and our bodies from all unclean actions, and the tendencies to them. Matt. v. 27, 28, "Look not on a woman to lust after her." Col. iii. 8, "Put filthy communication out of your mouths." 1 Tim. v. 22, "Keep thyself pure."

Q. What means are necessary to preserve and maintain a pure heart and a chaste life?

A. 1. Thoughtfulness and seriousness. Tit. ii. 6, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded."

2. Prayer to God, Ps. li. 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

3. Diligence in our proper business. 2 Sam. xi. 1, 2, "At the time when kings went out to battle, David walked on the roof of his house, and saw Bathsheba," &c.

4. Chaste company and good discourse. 1 Cor. v. 9, "Keep not company with fornicators." 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

5. Sobriety in drink. Isa. v. 11, "Wine inflames." Prov. xxiii. 30, 33, "The eyes of those that tarry long at the wine behold strange women."

6. Avoiding all incentives to impurity, as promiscuous dancing, plays, lascivious books and pictures, which excite irregular ideas. Prov. vi. 27, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burnt?" 1 Thess. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

7. A sense of God's omniscience. Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

8. Consideration.

Q. What considerations are proper to guard us from all impurities?

A. 1. On the importance of lawful and regular propagation to the well-being of the world. Gen. i. 27, "Male and female created he them." Ch. ii. 24, "For this cause therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." Mal. ii. 15, "Did not he make one (woman for one man)? And wherefore (but) one? That he might seek a godly seed."

2. On the large room God hath made for a wise and suitable choice in marriage. Heb. xiii. 4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." 1 Cor. vii. 39, "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord."

3. On the sad consequences of unlawful lust. Prov. vi. 26—35, "By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life." Ch. v. 11, "A wound and dishonour shall he get, and mourn at the last, when flesh and body are consumed."

4. On the dreadful threatenings denounced against the unclean. Eph. v. 5, "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God." Heb. xiii. 4, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

5. On the serious and weighty exhortations of Solomon to avoid these sins. Prov. i. 10, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Ch. ii. v. vi. vii. "Come not nigh the door of her house."

6. On the present advantages and the future rewards of chastity. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 17, 18, "Approving ourselves to God, by

pureness. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a father to you." Matt. v. 8, "The pure in heart shall see God."

Q. Is conversion from this sin exceeding difficult?

A. Yes. Prov. ii. 19, "None who go unto her return again."

SECTION VIII.

Q. WHICH is the third personal virtue, or duty, as to the body?

A. Diligence. Eph. iv. 28, "Let him labour, working with his hands."

Q. What is diligence?

A. A virtue which disposeth us to regular and vigorous endeavours in our lawful calling.

Q. What should be the properties of our calling?

A. 1. It should be honest. Eph. iv. 28, "Working with his hands the thing that is good."

2. It should be fitted to our genius, capacity, and fortune. Ps. cxxxi. 1, "I exercise not myself in things too high for me."

3. It should be stated. Ezra iii. 4, "As the duty of every day required."

Q. How should our worldly business be managed?

A. 1. With foresight. Prov. vi. 6, 8, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, who provideth her meat in the summer."

2. With dependence upon God, expressed by daily prayer. James iv. 15, "You ought to say, we will do so and so, if the Lord will." Ps. xc. 17, "The work of our hands establish thou it."

3. With attention. Eccl. ix. 10, "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Eph. v. 16, "Redeeming the time."

4. With prudence. Eccl. iii. 1, "There is a time and season for every thing." Ps. cxii. 5, "A good man guideth his affairs with discretion."

5. With firmness and resolution against little difficulties. Prov. xxii. 13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way." Ch. xx. 4, "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold."

Q. What extremes are to be avoided?

A. 1. On the one hand, sloth. Rom. xii. 11, "Be not slothful in business."

2. On the other hand, excessive, sinful labour. Eccl. iv. 8, "When there is no end of men's labour; and they are not satisfied with riches."

Q. What are the ill consequences and punishments of idleness?

A. 1. Bad habits of mind and life. 1 Tim. v. 13, "Turning tatlers, busy bodies, and wanderers about."

2. Poverty and hunger. Prov. xix. 15, x. 4, "The idle soul shall suffer hunger, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."

3. Vain fears, perplexity, foolish conceits. Prov. xxvi. 13, 16, xv. 19, "The slothful saith, There is a lion in the streets." His way is as a hedge of thorns. He is wise in his own conceit."

4. Ruin and misery hereafter. Matt. xxv. 26, 30, "Cast the slothful servant into outer darkness."

Q. What are the advantages and rewards of diligence?

A. 1. Freedom from temptations. 1 Tim. v. 13—15, "Satan makes a prey of the idle."

2. Acceptance, riches, preferment in this world. Prov. xiv. 23, xxii. 29, "In all labour there is profit. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings."

3. Future rewards; particularly to diligent, faithful servants. Col. iii. 22—24, "Of the Lord shall they receive the reward of the inheritance."

SECTION IX.

Q. WHICH is the fourth personal virtue, or duty, as it respects the body?

A. Self-denial, or mortification. Luke ix. 23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep under my body."

Q. What is self-denial?

A. A virtue by which the body, its supports and gratifications, and all our worldly interests, are subjected to the will of God, and the interest of the soul.

Q. Doth Christ require such principles and practices as may, in some cases, expose the body to pain and death?

A. Yes. Luke xiv. 26, 33, "He who loveth father or mother, house, land, or life, more than me, is not worthy of me."

Q. I. As to the branches of self-denial; must unlawful desires always be denied?

A. Yes. Gal. v. 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

Q. II. Must sinful actions always be avoided, how grateful soever?

A. Yes. Col. iii. 5, "Mortify your members which are upon the earth," &c.

Q. III. Must sinful customs and fashions be broken and avoided?

A. Yes. Rom. xii. 2, "Be not conformed to this world."

Q. IV. Must wicked and dangerous company be forsaken?

A. Yes. 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

Q. V. Must innocent and lawful desires be sometimes denied; and lawful actions be forborne?

A. Yes. 1 Cor. viii. 8—13, "If meat ensnare my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." Rom. xv. 3, "For even Christ pleased not himself."

Q. In what cases must this last branch of self-denial be practised?

A. 1. When it will keep us out of danger. Matt. xviii. 8, 9, "If thy hand or foot ensnare thee, cut it off," &c.

2. When it will tend to the health of the soul. Luke ix. 24, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

3. When the greater good of our neighbour requires it. 1 John iii. 16, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Rom. xiv. 19—21, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, or any thing whereby our brother stumbleth, is offended, or is made weak."

Q. What are the extremes of mortification?

A. 1. Too great indulgence on the one hand. Prov. xxiii. 3, "Be not desirous of dainties." Rom. xiii. 14, "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

2. Too great neglect and severity on the other hand. Col. ii. 22, 23, "A doctrine of men, to neglect the body."

Q. Is not private fasting sometimes necessary and useful for the better government of the body, and the health of the soul?

A. Yes. Psalm lxix. 10, "I chastened my soul with fasting." Matt. vi. 16—18, "When thou fastest, appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father which seeth in secret; and he shall reward thee openly."

Q. Is not a public fast proper and useful in times of calamity and trouble?

A. Yes. Joel i. 14, "Sanctify a fast." Ezra viii. 23, "We fasted and besought our Lord, and he was entreated of us."

Q. What is the true principle of self-denial?

A. Our own real interest. Rom. viii. 6, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Q. How may we be able to practise so difficult a duty?

A. By the assistance of God's Spirit. Rom. viii. 13, "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

PART V.

THE GENERAL PROPERTIES AND THE PERFECTION OF HOLINESS AND VIRTUE.

SECTION I.

HAVING gone over the chief branches of the Christian temper, and the chief duties of the Christian life, let us now consider some general qualifications of Christian duty; or those properties of true holiness which carry on a Christian towards perfection.

Q. What is the sum of this part?

A. That every true Christian endeavour to perform the whole will of God with sincerity, tenderness, and zeal; that he strive to grow in grace, and to excel in duty; and that he be constant, and persevere in the ways of holiness to the end of his life.

SECTION II.

Q. WHAT is the first character or qualification of true holiness?

A. Universality.

Q. Must obedience to God be universal?

A. Yes. Luke i. 6, "Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless."

Q. What is the only principle of universal obedience?

A. A new divine nature. Eph. iv. 23, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Or a heart sanctified by the Spirit of God, and actuated by faith. Psalm li. 10, "A right spirit." 2 Cor. v. 7, "We walk by faith."

Q. What is the extent of this obedience?

A. 1. It extends to the whole man, every power of mind and body; to every thought, word, and action.

2. It extends to all ranks of men, superiors and inferiors, rich and poor, learned and unlearned.

3. It extends to all ages, conditions, and stations of life; to old and young, to the single and married, and all the members of society.

Q. Will God accept a partial obedience?

A. No. James ii. 10, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

SECTION III.

Q. WHAT is the second general qualification of holiness, or obedience?

A. Sincerity, or uprightness. 1 Cor. v. 8, "Keep the feast with sincerity." John i. 47, "In whom is no guile."

Q. What doth godly sincerity contain in it?

A. 1. A real intention to please God in all our ways. Col. iii. 23, "Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord."

2. An impartial inquiry into the will of God, or a desire to know it. Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Rom. xii. 2, "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

3. Acting agreeably to our knowledge and judgment. Job xxiv. 13, "Some rebel against the light." John xiii. 17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

4. Avoiding every thing of the lawfulness of which we are in doubt. Rom. xiv. 23, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

SECTION IV.

Q. WHAT is the third general qualification of holiness, or Christian obedience?

A. Tenderness of spirit. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, "Because thine heart was tender."

Q. What character stands opposed to it?

A. Hardness of heart.

Q. Wherein doth this tenderness consist?

A. 1. In a sensibility of spirit about divine things. Heb. v. 14, "They have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

2. In quick reflections on every thing wrong or suspicious in our own temper and actions. 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, "David's heart smote him when he had cut off Saul's skirt."

3. In being much impressed with things of great moment, and yielding to conviction. Eph. iv. 18, 19, "Some, through the blindness of their heart, are past feeling; and have their conscience seared with a hot iron," 1 Tim. iv. 2.

Q. About what objects is religious tenderness chiefly exercised?

A. 1. About God's word. Isa. lxvi. 2, "Who tremble at the word."

2. About sin. Luke xxii. 62, "Peter wept bitterly." Psalm iv. 4, "Stand in awe, and sin not."

3. About providence. Psalm cxix. 120, "I am afraid of thy judgments." Job x. 2, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

4. About the honour of God. Psalm cxix. 158, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved."

SECTION V.

Q. WHAT is the fourth general qualification of holiness, or Christian duty?

A. Zeal. Rev. iii. 19, "Be zealous."

Q. What is zeal, in the general idea?

A. A strong and ardent concern about any thing, with lively and vigorous actings in it.

Q. May it not, therefore, be either a bad and sinful, or a good and laudable zeal?

A. Yes. 2 Cor. xi. 2; James iii. 14, (Gr.) "There is a godly and a bitter zeal."

Q. How must religious zeal be qualified?

A. 1. It must be always on the side of truth and goodness. Gal. iv. 18, "Be zealously affected in a good thing." Tit. iii. 8, "Be zealous for good works." Jer. ix. 3, "Valiant for the truth."

2. It must be in measure and degree proportionable to the

importance of the object. Matt. xxiii. 23, "There are weightier matters of the law." Jude 20, "Making a difference."

3. It must be exercised by lawful and regular methods. Luke ix. 54, Not by "calling for fire from heaven." 1 Cor. iii. 3. Not by "strife and envy."

4. It must be calm, and conducted by reason and prudence. Rom. x. 2, "Zeal according to knowledge." James iii. 13—18, "If ye have bitter zeal in your heart, glory not. For the wisdom from above is gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality."

SECTION VI.

Q. What is the fifth general qualification of true holiness?

A. Growth and excellence; or, progress and improvement. 1 Thess. iv. 1, "Abound more and more." 1 Cor. xiv. 12, "Seek to excel."

Q. What particulars do growth and excellence carry in them?

A. I. Improved knowledge. 1 Tim. iv. 6; 2 Pet. iii. 18, "Being nourished up in good doctrine. Grow in knowledge."

Q. What particular branches of knowledge is it most important to grow in?

A. 1. To grow in the knowledge of the reasons for religion. 1 Pet. iii. 15, "Be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you."

2. To gain a more distinct apprehension of its great truths, especially the wisdom of God in Christ, and the several branches of Christian duty. 1 Cor. xiv. 20, "Be not children in understanding."

3. To obtain more distinct and worthy apprehensions of the nature and value of the heavenly blessedness. Eph. i. 18, "That ye may know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

4. In order to all this, apply to a more careful study of the scriptures. 1 Pet. ii. 2, "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Q. What is the second particular that growth and excellence carry in them?

A. II. Wisdom and prudence. Matt. x. 16, "Be wise as serpents."

Q. What is the province of Christian prudence?

A. 1. To judge of the fitness or unfitness of means to obtain a chosen end; to judge of seasons, circumstances, tempers, so as to suit our behaviour to all cases. Eccl. viii. 5, "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

2. To avoid such a manner of doing any duty as may give offence to the wise; disgust the weak and young; furnish matter of banter to the profane; procure ill-will to ourselves from the

evil-minded; or interfere with our lawful callings. 1 Cor. ix. 20, 22, "To the weak became I as weak." Col. iv. 5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." Rom. xiv. 16, "Let not your good be evil spoken of."

3. To judge of the importance of different duties, and make the less give way to the greater, and positive to moral. Matt. ix. 13, "Go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

Q. What is the third particular that growth and excellence carry in them?

A. III. Fortitude, or courage. 2 Pet. i. 5, "Add to your faith virtue;" that is, courage.

Q. What is fortitude?

A. A virtue which enables us to withstand and overcome the temptations whereby we may be hindered in duty; whether we are exposed to danger of pain, or loss.

Q. What branches doth it comprehend?

A. 1. A fixed, determined resolution in view of danger, having deliberated the matter, and counted the cost. Neh. vi. 11, "Should such a man as I flee?" Acts xxi. 13, "I am ready to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." Luke xii. 4, 5, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body."

2. Trust in God. Psalm cxii. 7, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

3. Integrity of heart, and greatness of mind. Job xxvii. 5, 6, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

4. Calmness, and coolness of head. Isa. xxx. 15, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Eccl. vii. 8, "The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."

5. Readiness to undertake services; application and steadiness to go through them. Isa. vi. 8, "Here am I, send me." 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Acts xx. 24, "None of these afflictions move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."

Q. What is the best means to support and increase Christian courage.

A. Prayer. 1 Pet. v. 10, "The God of all grace stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Q. What is the fourth particular that growth and excellence carry in them?

A. IV. Heavenly-mindedness. Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation is in heaven."

Q. What doth this temper include?

A. 1. Belief that there is a heavenly city prepared for faithful Christians. Heb. xi. 10, "He looked for a city that hath foundations."

2. Thoughts, desires, and hopes, carried up thither. Col. iii. 2,

"Set your affections on things above." Heb. xi. 14, 16, "They desire and seek a better country." Rom. v. 2, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Q. What are the advantages of this heavenly temper?

A. 1. It giveth a greatness and heroic dignity of soul. Heb. xi. 26, "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect to the recompence of the reward."

2. It maketh a soul calm and quiet under all sorts of trials. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18, "For which cause we faint not," &c.

3. It raiseth a nobler pleasure in the soul than the hopes of any advantages on earth. Heb. xi. 13, "They embraced the promises, confessing they were pilgrims on earth." 1 Pet. i. 8, "Ye rejoice in an unseen Saviour, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

4. It helps to perfect every grace, and duty. 1 John iii. 3, "Every man that hath this hope purifies himself as Christ is pure."

Q. What is the fifth particular that growth and excellence carry in them?

A. V. Preparedness of mind for dying. Phil. i. 23, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

Q. What minds are in this prepared state?

A. Minds possessed of all the foregoing virtues. Prov. xiv. 32, "The righteous hath hope in his death."

Q. Under what notions should we consider dying, in order to be better prepared for it?

A. 1. As taking leave of all the world at once. Psalm xlix. 10, "They die, and leave their wealth to others."

2. As finishing our time, and fixing our eternal character. Rev. xxii. 11, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still. He who is righteous, let him be righteous still."

3. As the body's return to corruption and dust. Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return."

4. As the soul's passage into a new and everlasting world. Eccl. xii. 7, "The spirit returns to God." Luke xvi. 22, Lazarus is carried to Abraham's bosom; the rich man to hell.

Q. What is the sixth particular that growth and excellence carry in them?

A. VI. Constancy and perseverance. Heb. x. 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith," &c.

Q. Is this necessary to our salvation?

A. Yes. Gal. vi. 9, "We shall reap, if we faint not."

Q. Will God enable those who have the foregoing qualifications to persevere?

A. Yes. 2 Thess. iii. 3, "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you." Phil. i. 6, "Being confident that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

PART VI.

OF REPENTANCE.

SECTION I.

Q. What is repentance?

A. An inward change and reformation of the whole soul, accompanied with amendment of the whole life. Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord."

Q. May a sinner, who is thoroughly converted by repentance, hope for pardon?

A. Yes. Acts iii. 19, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Q. But if he defer repentance to the last, is there ground of hope?

A. Very little. Heb. xii. 14, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 10, "Every one shall receive the things done in the body," &c.

Q. Are greater sins, committed through frailty, more capable of pardon, than lesser sins, committed with deliberation, and an evil mind?

A. Yes. Gal. vi. 1, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such a one in the spiritof meekness." Numb. xv. 33, "The soul that doeth presumptuously shall be cut off."

Q. Which are the two principal sorts of repentance?

A. 1. A wicked man's repentance of his whole ungodly life. Ezek. xxxiii. 19, "If the wicked man turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby."

2. A good man's repentance of his daily, particular failings. John xiii. 10, "Jesus saith, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet."

SECTION II.

Q. Of what parts doth repentance consist?

A. Of these; I. Examination, or self-reflection. Psalm cxix. 59, "I thought on my ways, and turned."

Q. What judgment of mind, and sense of our state should be avoided upon examination?

A. 1. A presuming one. Luke xviii. 9, "Trusting in ourselves that we are righteous."

2. A despairing one. Jer. xviii. 12, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices: we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart."

Q. What is the second part of repentance?

A. II. Self-condemnation, or the true judgment of the soul upon its own case. Gen. xlii. 21, "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty." Job xlii. 6, "I abhor myself, and repent."

III. Confession, with godly sorrow and shame. Luke xv. 21, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." Luke xxii. 62, "And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Jer. xxxi. 19, "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded."

IV. Earnest prayers for pardon. Luke xviii. 13, "And the publican smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

V. A resolution to turn. Hosea vi. 1, "Come and let us return unto the Lord."

VI. Amendment. Matt. iii. 8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

Q. Must not this amendment extend both to God and man?

A. Yes. Job xxxiv. 31, 32, "I will not offend any more. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." Luke xix. 8, "If I have wronged any man, I restore him four-fold."

Q. Must there not be a believing regard to Christ in all the parts of repentance?

A. Yes. Luke xxiv. 47, "That repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name." 1 John ii. 12, "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

PART VII.

GENERAL MOTIVES TO RELIGION AND VIRTUE; OR REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

Q. Which are the principal gospel motives to religion and virtue?

A. The promises of eternal life and happiness; and the threatenings of eternal misery. 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." 2 Thess. ii. 1, "We beseech you by the coming of Christ, and our gathering together unto him."

Q. But since there are other powerful motives contained in scripture, let me ask, which is the first?

A. 1. The assurance of pardon given us by Christ; a powerful motive to repentance and a new life. Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

2. The hope of divine approbation, and the honour that Christ will confer upon us. John xii. 26, "If any man serve me, him

will my Father honour." Ch. xv. 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

3. The promise of divine assistance to strengthen us for all the difficulties which may attend a religious life. Luke xi. 9—13, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him." 1 Cor. x. 13, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

4. The testimony of the scriptures for a particular providence over the righteous; and the promise that all things shall work together for their good. Psalm xxxiii. 18, "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him." Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "No good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly."

5. The excellency and present good consequences of piety, and the deformity and bad effects of sin. 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11, "He that will see good days, let him avoid evil, and do good." 1 Tim. iv. 8, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is."

Q. Doth not piety tend to bodily health, and sin to pain and sickness?

A. Yes. Prov. iii. 7, 8, "Fear the Lord and depart from evil: it shall be health to thee." Psalm cvii. 17, "Fools, because of their iniquities, are afflicted." Psalm lv. 23, "Deceitful men shall not live out half their days."

Q. Is not piety generally attended with competence, or comfortable provision for this life; and sin with poverty and ruin?

A. Yes. Psalm xxxiv. 9, "There is no want to them that fear God." Prov. iii. 33, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

Q. Doth not piety give men reputation, and sin bring them to shame?

A. Yes. Psalm cxii. 6, 9, "The righteous shall be exalted with honour, and had in everlasting remembrance." 1 Sam. ii. 30, "They that despise God shall be lightly esteemed."

Q. Is not piety attended with peace and serenity, and sin with sorrow and remorse?

A. Yes. Prov. xiv. 14, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself; but the backslider shall be filled with his own ways." Prov. xviii. 14, "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

Q. Doth not piety fill the soul with calmness and joy in death, but sin with terror and anguish?

A. Yes. Prov. xiv. 32, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." Psalm xxxvii. 37, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

Q. If all men were duly considerate, might arguments drawn from the nature, reasonableness, and consequences of piety, have much greater weight with them?

A. Yes. Prov. xii. 26, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour."

Q. But in the present corrupt state of the world, which are the most effectual motives to deter men from sin, and persuade them to holiness?

A. Such as are drawn from a judgment to come, and future recompences. Eccl. xii. 14, "God will bring every work into judgment." Rev. xxii. 12, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

Q. When will the day of judgment be?

A. Mark xiii. 32, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

Q. Will it be solemn and awful?

A. Yes. Rom. ii. 5, It will be "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Q. What are the circumstances that will render it so?

A. 1. It will be sudden. 1 Thess. v. 2, "The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night."

2. The world will be dissolved. 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."

3. Christ shall appear in pomp and majesty. 1 Thess. iv. 16, "The Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout." Matt. xxiv. 30, 31, "He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, and all his angels with him."

4. All mankind will be assembled to receive their doom. Rev. xx. 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened, and the dead were judged according to their works."

5. Sentence will be passed with impartial justice. Rom. ii. 11, "For there is no respect of persons with God."

6. This sentence will be put in immediate execution. Matt. xxv. 46, "And the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Q. What representations of the future blessedness of good men do the scriptures give us, borrowed from things seen and enjoyed at present?

A. That blessedness is represented by every possession which men now value, and which contributes to render their lives easy and delightful; together with the strongest assurances of certain and eternal enjoyment.

Q. What particular instances can you give?

A. 1. It is represented by a house. John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house are many mansions:" and the inhabitants of it as God's family. Eph. iii. 15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

2. It is represented by a city. Heb. xi. 16, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, having prepared for them a city:" and faithful Christians are represented as citizens of it now, and as living in it at last. Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven." Rev. xxi. 24, "The nations which are saved do walk in the light of it."

3. It is represented by a kingdom, and the inhabitants of it are described as kings. Rev. i. 6; Matt. xxv. 34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

4. It is represented as a crown, and the receivers of it as joyful conquerors. 2 Tim. iv. 8, "The judge shall give a crown of righteousness to them that love his appearing." Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

5. It is represented by sitting on a throne. Rev. iii. 21, "To him who overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my throne."

6. It is represented by an inheritance, of which good Christians are now heirs. Rom. viii. 17; 1 Pet. i. 4, "To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for us."

7. It is represented by paradise, and all the delights of that garden which was lost by Adam's transgression. Luke xxiii. 43, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Rev. ii. 7, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

8. It is represented by such objects as are most grateful to our senses; as light, music, and feasting. Psalm xcvii. 11, "Light is sown for the righteous." Rev. xv. 3, "They sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb." Rev. xix. 9, "The marriage supper of the Lamb."

Q. What do these descriptions, borrowed from earthly things, import?

A. That Christ will honour and prefer his faithful servants beyond all imagination; and will, in marks of esteem and love, exceed their highest expectations. 1 John iii. 2, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Q. What will be the future blessedness of good Christians, as to the body?

A. It shall be raised up and made a spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious body." Phil. iii. 21, "Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." 1 Cor. xv. 42—54, "It is raised in incorruption, in glory, in power, a spiritual body; we shall bear the image of the heavenly."

Q. What other general representations of future blessedness do the scriptures give us?

A. 1. They rest from all their labours, enemies, and dangers. Rev. xiv. 13; Heb. iv. 9, "There remaineth a rest to the people

of God." 1 Cor. xv. 26, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

2. Their pains and sorrows are over. Rev. xxi. 4, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain."

3. Their imperfections shall be removed, and their virtues perfected. 1 Cor. xiii. 10, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Eph. v. 27, "That he may present it a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

4. Their knowledge shall be greatly advanced as to extent, clearness, and easiness of attainment. 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12, "Then shall we see face to face. Then shall I know even as I am known."

5. They shall see God and Jesus Christ; and by this sight be changed into their likeness. Matt. v. 8, "The pure in heart shall see God." 1 John iii. 2, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

6. They shall have signal honour conferred upon them.

(1.) They shall have the honour of appearing with Christ. Col. iii. 4, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

(2.) Of being owned and approved by him as his faithful servants. Rev. iii. 5, "I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." Matt. xxv. 21, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

(3.) Of being received by him with all marks of respect and affection. Jude 24, "He will present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding great joy."

7. They shall enjoy the wisest, most honourable, and best company. Heb. xii. 22, 23, "We are come to the city of the living God, to Jesus the mediator, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

8. They shall have the joy which ariseth from their perfection in holiness, the remembrance of their good works, their freedom from all evil, and enjoyment of all good. Psalm xvii. 15, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." Rev. xiv. 13, "Their works shall follow them." Rev. xxi. 7, "He who overcometh shall inherit all things; I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

9. They are assured of the eternal duration of their whole happiness. Psalm xvi. 11, "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." 1 Thess. iv. 17, "So shall we be ever with the Lord."

Q. Will good Christians shine in future honours and preferments, according to their different degrees of wisdom, piety, and usefulness on earth?

A. Yes. Dan. xii. 3, "They who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they who turn many to right-

eousness, as the stars for ever and ever." 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42, "One star differeth from another star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead." Rev. ii. 23, "I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Q. Is it possible, under the divine government, that virtue and piety, practised with self-denial and sufferings, should go finally unrewarded?

A. No. Gen. xviii. 25, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Heb. vi. 10, "God is not unrighteous to forget your labours of love."

Q. Is it not then lawful, and also a duty, to look at these unseen rewards, as motives to holiness?

A. Yes. Heb. xi. 26, "Moses had respect unto the recompence of reward." Heb. xii. 2, "Looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross," &c. 2 Cor. iv. 18, "We look at things unseen and eternal."

Q. Will wicked men be punished according to their degrees of wickedness.

A. Yes. Luke vii. 47, 48, "He who knows his Lord's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Matt. xi. 24, "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Q. What are some of the scripture representations of the future punishment of wicked men?

A. Dan. xii. 2, "They shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt." Matt. xxv. 41, "Christ will say unto them, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Mark ix. 44, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Rev. xxi. 8, "They shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Q. What use are we to make of these discoveries?

A. 2 Pet. iii. 14, "Seeing we look for such things, we should be diligent, that we may be found of Christ in peace, without spot, and blameless."

PART VIII.

A GENERAL APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE TO YOUNG PERSONS.

Q. SINCE you have been so largely and clearly instructed in the nature and importance of religion, what is upon the whole your duty?

A. To consecrate my whole life, and especially my youth, to the service of God, and the practice of piety. Eccl. xii. 1, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Q. What is necessary in order to this?

A. 1. That I carefully avoid all fleshly lusts and sinful pleasures; and be moderate in the use of lawful and innocent ones. 2 Tim. ii. 22, "Flee youthful lusts." Titus ii. 6, "Young men exhort to be sober-minded."

2. That I avoid the society of the wicked, and choose the sober and righteous for my companions. Prov. i. 10, 15, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Ps. xvi. 3, "The saints and the excellent, in whom is all my delight."

3. That I daily and attentively read and meditate upon the holy scriptures. Ps. cxix. 9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

4. That I love prayer, and be serious, constant, and fervent in the exercises of devotion. 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10, "And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren, and he called on the God of Israel for his preservation and blessing. And God granted him that which he requested."

5. That I diligently attend and carefully improve public worship and instruction. Ps. xcii. 13, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

6. That I be obedient and submissive to my parents, teachers, and other superiors. 1 Pet. v. 5, "Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder."

Q. Is it not dangerous to put off religion till hereafter?

A. Yes. Prov. xxvii. 1, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Q. Whence doth this danger arise?

A. 1. Sin is very deceitful, and tends to harden and stupify the heart. Heb. iii. 13, "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

2. Vicious habits and customs are very hard to be altered. Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

3. When I come to engage in the business of this world, I shall have less time and ability to mind religion. 1 Cor. vii. 35, "That you may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

4. Old age is a very improper season to enter upon this great work. Eccl. xii. 1, "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

5. God may cut me off in my youth and summon me to judgment. Job xxi. 23, "One dieth in his full strength." Eccl. xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Q. What other motives should engage you to be religious betimes?

A. 1. Early piety is peculiarly pleasing to God and Christ. Jer. ii. 2, "I remember the kindness of thy youth." John xxi. 20, "John was the disciple whom Jesus loved."

2. I shall thus afford satisfaction and joy to my parents and friends. Prov. x. 1, "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

3. It will be the most acceptable return I can make for the instructions and prayers of Christian ministers. 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Phil. ii. 1, 2, "If there be any love and mercies, fulfil ye my joy."

4. It will tend greatly to the support and spread of religion in the next generation. Ps. lxxviii. 4, 6, "That the generation to come might know the laws and wonderful works of God, who shall arise and declare them to their children."

5. Thus I shall secure to myself the noblest pleasure and the firmest peace. Prov. iii. 17, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

6. Thus I shall become eminent in religion, and remarkably exemplary and useful. 1 Kings xviii. 3, 12, "Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, for he feared him from his youth."

7. I may expect distinguishing honour and happiness in the better world. Dan. x. 11, xii. 13, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Q. With the force of all these motives before you, whom do you this day choose to serve?

A. The glorious and everlasting God, my Creator and Benefactor. Ps. cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid."

Q. Will you be ever mindful of these solemn engagements you have laid yourselves under in the presence of God and his people?

A. Yes; and, by his assistance, will make it the care and business of my whole life to please him, and save my soul. Ps. cxix. 106, 115, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God."

LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG CLERGYMAN,

FROM THE LATE REV. JOB ORTON.

"He was of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all men; allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to him; and provided men did but 'fear God and work righteousness,' he loved them heartily, how distant soever from him in judgment about things less necessary; in all which he is very worthy to be a pattern to men of all persuasions whatsoever."—See Archbishop Tillotson's Funeral Sermon for the Rev. Thomas Gouge, who was a Nonconformist.

TO THE REV. JAMES STONHOUSE, M.D.

RECTOR OF GREAT AND LITTLE CHEVEREL, WILTSHIRE.

Rev. and dear Sir,

It is with great pleasure I take this opportunity of paying a tribute of public respect to you. Twenty years have now nearly elapsed since our friendship first began; which has been a delightful source of pleasure and improvement to me. Mr. Orton brought us together at first, soon after I began my clerical career, and from the kind offices of you both, it received a happy direction both having advised, counselled, cautioned, and encouraged me.* In your parish, Sir, I spent some of my happiest and most useful days; in a situation favourable to study and self-improvement, among an affectionate and, in general, a tractable people. The scene has since been considerably changed; but the respect and good-will which I found among your farmers and cottagers, no length of time will be able ever to efface from my memory.

The greatest part of the Letters, contained in this little volume, were written by Mr. Orton to me whilst I resided at Cheverel; which I found of considerable use to me there, and to the parishes to which I afterwards removed. I had selected most of them from a large number, with which he had favoured me, to be a kind of memorial† of their honoured writer, and as a manual for my future use. When I showed them to you, you were pleased to speak of them as letters you much esteemed; and when I expressed an inclination of publishing them, for the service of my younger brethren in the ministry,‡ the design met with your approbation and encouragement. Mr. Orton hath already appeared in

* Witness these letters, and your Hints to a Curate.

† For that pattern which I saw in him, and for that conversation which I had with him, I know how much I have to answer for to God. And though my reflecting on that which I knew in him gives me just cause of being deeply humbled in myself, and before God; yet I feel no more sensible pleasure in any thing, than in going over in my thoughts all that I saw and observed in him."—Bishop Burnet concerning Archbishop Leighton. See Pastoral Care.

‡ An eminent Prelate, to whom these Letters were presented, was pleased to make the following remark on them.—"They may edify more than the younger part of the clergy, for whom alone you intend them."

And says another:—"Accept my thanks for the pleasure I have received from the perusal of Mr. Orton's Letters. The good sense, warm piety, becoming zeal for the promotion of Christian virtue, and rendering the pastoral character respectable and useful, which run through the publication, make it worthy the attention of the parochial clergy of all ages."

Other testimonies of a similiar kind might be adduced, were it deemed necessary, which show the great candour and moderation of their writers.

the world under the respectable characters of a commentator, a sermon writer, and a biographer; and if I introduce him in a new light as that of a correspondent, I hope, I shall not lessen his merit; the general contents of the following letters being on subjects of considerable importance; the advice given in them, with respect to the pastoral care, having been found practicable (especially in country parishes); and which was the result of his own experience and observation.

To you, Sir, I am inclined, from various motives, to inscribe these letters of our common friend; which you will be pleased to consider as a testimony of my sincere respect for you,

I am, Rev. and Dear Sir

Your obliged and most humble servant,

THOMAS STEDMAN.

Shrewsbury, April, 1791.

In the *Critical Review*, for June, 1791, these Letters are thus noticed.

Mr. Orton was a very respectable dissenting minister; and his advice to the young clergyman is truly excellent. It displays the full character of its author, strictly, rationally, and, in general, cheerfully pious: judicious, zealous in doing good, and indefatigable in being useful. The letters are not indeed of the fashionable mould, for they inculcate a strict attention to the duty of a parish priest; a regard to the morals of his parishioners; frequent conversation on moral and religious subjects*; an earnest endeavour to lead them to reflect, and to catch, in turn, hints for the future conduct by observing what seemed most striking, what appeared most interesting. The observations on different authors interspersed are frequently just.

Extract from the *Monthly Review*, for August, 1791.

Mr. Orton has been long known and esteemed, as a man of integrity, of exemplary piety, virtue, and benevolence, as well as of erudition. Mr. Stedman, the editor, was the person to whom the Letters were originally written. They contain observations which may be useful to all persons, but are particularly adapted for the service of the clergy, and the younger part of them. Among others, we find some sensible remarks on frugality: the necessity of attending to which is urged with great fervour, and, perhaps, could never be more seasonably pressed than at the present time. This little volume is very deserving of the regard of those for whose benefit it is immediately designed.

LETTERS TO A YOUNG CLERGYMAN.

LETTER I.

Kidderminster, Oct. 4, 1771.

Dear Sir.—I am very glad for Dr. Stonhouse's sake, and also for your own, that you intend accepting the curacy of Little Cheverel.* The doctor is a learned, genteel, good tempered man; truly serious, rationally evangelical, and judiciously zealous.† He will treat you like a friend and a brother, and you will be much pleased and improved by his company and conversation. He preaches during his residence twice every Sunday, and has a lecture on Wednesday evening. But ill health obliges him to live the greater part of the year at Bristol, for the benefit of the waters there. I could say more of his parish every way, than the doctor chooses to write to you of himself, because he would not raise too high expectations. I am pleased with the list of books‡ you intend taking with you, but you will allow me to add, that I hope you will take some of your classics, in order to keep up, and improve your knowledge of the languages; especially such as may increase your critical acquaintance with the New Testament.

I am, your affectionate and faithful servant,

Job Orton.

LETTER II.

I comply with your request in writing to you, though I have nothing to say very deserving of your notice. But I am determined there shall be no defect in my friendly regards for you, how many soever there may be in the manner of expressing them.

* Near Devizes in Wiltshire.

† Dr. Stonhouse was educated at Winchester School, and afterwards at St. John's College, Oxford. For twenty years he practised as a physician at Northampton, where he founded a county infirmary. He was subsequently ordained Deacon of the Church of England by the Bishop of Hereford; and on the following week was admitted into Priest's orders by the Bishop of Bristol. After a life of active piety and usefulness, this holy man feel asleep in Jesus Christ on December 8th, 1795, in the 80th year of his age; and was buried in the Wells Chapel.

‡ "The head of my college procured me a curacy in a small country town. Thither I went, not without my collection of books, the use of which I would not have foregone for a mitre."—Knox.

I was glad to hear of your safe arrival at Cheverel; though it was a mortification to me not to see you in your way thither. You retire to a country village under some disadvantages arising from the season of the year, and the agreeable situation you have left."* But you have good reason to believe that you are in the way of duty, following your great Master's directions, and doing his work in that station which he hath appointed for you; and I have a cheerful persuasion that you will be made very useful in it. To see this will add charms to solitude, and pleasure to study and preaching: and abundantly make up what otherwise you would greatly regret the loss of. Every person to whom your labours prove beneficial will be a faithful friend to you, and love and honour you as a spiritual father. Though your distance from your good mother † is a painful circumstance, yet, as she has other dutiful children with her, this will alleviate it both to her and to you. And surely our Master very reasonably requires us to leave father, mother, house, &c., yea all, to follow him (Matt. x. 37). And you well know what he promises to those who do it with courage and cheerfulness.

As you preach but once on a Sunday, permit me to advise you on the other part of the day to give your auditory a short, plain, and practical exposition of the epistle or gospel for the day; which will be a very useful exercise to yourself, extremely agreeable to the parish, and, if I mistake not, is required in some of your canons or episcopal directions (see canon 49). Archbishop Tennison, in his letter to his suffragans (1695), saith, "I recommend to your care the preaching of your clergy in the afternoons upon catechetical heads; both that the people may be better grounded in the faith, and also kept from other assemblies." Many of our elder clergy used expounding in the manner I propose; and Bishop Burnet, in his Pastoral Care, urges long texts, and short sermons, that is, expounding.‡ I suppose

* Bridgnorth, in the county of Salop. The Editor's birth-place, near which are the venerable remains of Horde's Park, the seat of his ancestors of that name for many centuries.

† Some afflictive circumstances, which afterwards befell this excellent parent, especially a paralytic seizure, reminded her children of the following lines of Mr. Pope, which were descriptive of their filial affection towards her.

Me let the tender office long engage,
To rock the cradle of reposing age;
With lenient arts, extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death;
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,——
And keep awhile one parent from the sky.

She died April 8, 1793, in the 74th year of her age (Jude 21, latter part). She had been educated a dissenter, by her pious parents, who lived at West Bromwich, in Staffordshire; and continued such till she married, May 20, 1741, her husband being a strict conformist; by whom she had thirteen children: four of whom survive, desiring to "arise up and call her blessed."

‡ See also Abp. Hort's Instructions to the Clergy, p. 24, &c., and Abp. Secker's third charge to the clergy.

Dean Stanhope's exposition of the epistles and gospels were delivered in public, and also that of Hole on the Catechism and others. At other seasons, it may be advisable to catechize in public,* the elder children and youth, on that part of the Sunday when you do not preach, and to expound some of the catechism upon Lewis's plan, using the helps of some commentators upon it.† And an hour once a week might be profitably devoted to catechize the younger children, either in the chancel of the church, or at the parsonage house, which suits you and the season of the year best, to whom you might and must talk plainly and familiarly. You will find this very useful to yourself, as well as to them; as you will thereby increase a habit of using plain language, and will see how far they understand you, and by what they are most struck and affected. Serious parents will like you for this care and attention to their offspring. I found it of great use to encourage the young men of my congregation at Shrewsbury, to come to me from eight o'clock to ten on a Sunday evening, and to talk in a friendly manner to them on any useful subject, especially the sermons of the preceding day. By this practice I learnt much from them, what in a sermon they did not understand, and what they felt and were improved by in it. No studies at the university can teach this experimental knowledge, this acquaintance with human nature. As I suppose the doctor hath left you some plain practical books to give away among the parishioners, it will be natural to take opportunities of asking them whether they have read and understood them. By so doing you may introduce some serious discourse, and learn something of their characters, which it would otherwise be difficult to do, without its appearing forced and unseasonable; and they may be led to join in the conversation, or else they may only give you the hearing. The principal difficulty in the pastoral care is to get our people to converse freely, and to open their minds. And there is no judiciously suiting and applying remedies, without knowing the disease, and the patient's constitution; and this, in many cases, can only be learned from themselves. You are, no doubt, duly sensible that "God giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6); and you will act upon that good old maxim, "bene orasse est bene studuisse." May God multiply the seed you are sowing in public

* It is said of Mr. Hooker, author of the Ecclesiastical Polity, that his custom was to preach once every Sunday, and he or his curate to catechize after the second lesson in the evening prayer. See his life by Walton. "Oh," saith a worthy clergyman, "for the primitive custom of catechizing! Every youth can preach, but he is a man indeed that can profitably catechize:"

† Particularly "Lectures on the Catechism of the church of England;" by William Gilpin, M. A., vicar of Boldre, near Lymington. The same gentleman has lately published a volume of "Sermons preached to a country congregation: to which are added a few hints for Sermons; intended chiefly for the use of the younger Clergy," which deserve particular attention: the editor had almost said, the preaching of the younger clergy.

and private, and increase in you and by you the fruits of righteousness!

Your desire of my advice in your present situation must be my apology for the freedom I have taken in this letter. As to any other particulars I must refer you to Dr. Doddridge's Life, and Mr. Philip Henry's,* the situation of the latter in particular, so exactly resembling your own. If you meet with Herbert's Country Parson† pray read it. Probably you may do this in Wiltshire, as he was rector of Bemerton, in that county.

I am, your faithful friend,

Dec. 4, 1771. JOB ORTON.

LETTER III.

Jan. 31, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—As a sincere friend to the reputation and usefulness of the clergy, and the honour of our common Christianity, I am an enemy to pluralities in general. But you are so circumstanced that I see no material objection to your acceptance of the curacy of Great Cheverel.‡ Your sphere of usefulness will be enlarged, the inhabitants of that village and its environs will enjoy your labours, without being exposed to censure for

* A most instructive book, containing much curious history of the times in which he lived, and which Mr. Orton seems to have made his model for writing his excellent Life of Dr. Doddridge. The fourth edition of which was published by Mr. Orton in 1765.

† Another useful book, but too little known by the clergy. The late pious Bishop Horne had once intended reprinting it; but in a letter received a few months before his death, he writes:—"As I have no longer any thoughts of reprinting Herbert's Country Parson, to see it done by Mr. * * will be a sincere pleasure." Mr. Churton, in his account of that amiable and good man, and exemplary parish priest, Dr. Townson, late rector of Malpas, in Cheshire, informs us, that, during his last illness, he read Mr. Herbert's Country Parson, together with Isaac Walton's Lives of George Herbert, &c. "with a view, no doubt, to trim his lamp and prepare for his Lord, by comparing his conduct with the examples of those meek and holy men, described by that pleasing and faithful biographer."

Lord Edward Herbert, baron of Cherbury, (the celebrated deist, and who was the first and one of the most eminent writers in the cause of deism) was Mr. George Herbert's eldest brother. His Lordship was born at Eyton, in Shropshire, and received a part of his education at Diddlebury, in the same county. In his life, written by himself, which is a kind of entertaining romance, he makes mention of his brother in the following manner:—"My brother George was so excellent a scholar, that he was made public orator of the university of Cambridge, some of whose English works are extant, which, though they be rare in their kind, yet are far short of expressing those perfections he had in the Greek and Latin tongue, and all divine and human literature. His life was most holy and exemplary; insomuch, that about Salisbury, where he lived beneficed for many years, he was little less than *sainted*. He was not exempt from passion and choler, being infirmities to which all our race is subject; but, that excepted, without reproach in his actions." Lord Bacon dedicated to him a translation of some Psalms into English verse. See also his Life at the end of his Country Parson, and Sacred Poems.

Bemerton has been remarkable for the number of its rectors who have distinguished themselves in the literary world; as Herbert, Norris, Hawes, Coxe, &c.

‡ An adjoining parish.

rambling from their own fold and deserting their established pastor, who, I find, is very old, and too infirm to officiate any longer among them. I presume, as the villages are so near to one another, all they of Little Cheverel who attend your Sunday morning prayers, will, without difficulty, accompany you to Great Cheverel, and perhaps will come there with more spirit, as they will be to hear you preach; and they of that parish will be likely to attend your prayers and sermons in the afternoon. This was the case with Mr. Jenks while he held the livings of Harley and Kenley together, and thus he satisfied his own well-informed and tender conscience, and vindicated himself to the world for being a pluralist. The main thing to be feared (should you accept this curacy) is, lest your proper parish, having no service in the morning, should contract a habit of profaning or misspending the sabbath. But I know you will caution them on this head, and exhort and encourage them to go with you; and I hope and believe they have such a regard to you and the doctor, and so much sense of religion, at least decency, that this evil will not arise. It is an encouraging circumstance, that the parish is so desirous of your services. Upon the whole, your work will be much the same as if you had a parish in a large town, where some parts of it were as far distant from others as the two parishes of the Cheverels are. Let me entreat you to be careful of your health, as walking home after preaching, and your lungs being warmed by exercise, if the air be cold, may be injurious to you without great caution: walking to Great Cheverel when the weather is hot, and going immediately into a large cold church, may be equally prejudicial; and returning home late at night from funerals may be worse than either. I know not what is the custom of those parishes, but you ought to make a point of having the funerals early. Last night, in the midst of a thick snow and severe frost, our vicar and his curate were burying two corpses after five o'clock by candle light. This ought not to be endured. You will excuse these hints, as young ministers do not always attend sufficiently to such minutiæ.

If you find any serious or teachable young men at Great Cheverel, I suppose you will join them to the little society which you have already formed in your other parish, as they will not think it much trouble to come so short a way to meet them. Or, if that cannot be done, perhaps they might be engaged to meet together on a Sunday evening, in their own village, for reading and religious conversation; especially if you can find some prudent and experienced Christian there, who will preside over and assist them.* I submit it to your considera-

* Such a person was found in the next parish, of West Lavington, one David Saunders, a poor honest shepherd, who had acquired a surprising knowledge of the scriptures, readiness in prayer, and spiritual conversation. He used to keep his bible in the

tion, whether it would not be advisable to fix on a stated day weekly to visit your new flock; as then they will expect you; and I hope dispose their business so that they may be more at leisure to receive you. You will, I doubt not, take notice (particular, tender notice) of their children; inquire if they have learned their catechism, ask them a few questions in it, which will give you a natural opportunity of dropping some hints of encouragement. In the same view, you will ask them what text you preached on the preceding Sunday, and whether they remember any thing which you then said. This will give you a handle to remind them of what they should have particularly attended to and observed; engage their attention another time; and inoffensively admonish and instruct their parents, and others of the family, who may be present; who sometimes are but larger children in knowledge and understanding, and need milk as much as the less. You will sometimes call upon the old incumbent; show him all proper respect; and you may, perhaps have an opportunity of suggesting a seasonable hint to him, without giving him offence; for many teachers need to be taught.

As Providence hath led you into a sphere of double service, I have no doubt but you will double your diligence and your prayers; in which I heartily concur, that you may have a double portion of the Spirit of your divine Master, and that his strength may be sufficient for you.

There is no book I have so often read as Corbet's "Self-employment in Secret."* It is always upon my desk; it is my vade-mecum in travelling; it is by my bed-side in sickness. I can read a little in this, when I can read nothing else; it is the best manual I know for a Christian and a minister. His prudential maxims are excellent, founded on much experience, and knowledge of mankind; and abating a few phrases, common in those days, but awkward now, there is great sprightliness and strength in it. It is indeed (as Mr. Howe in his preface calls it) "the anatomy of his heart;" and happy the heart that can trace its image in itself! It will furnish excellent materials for addressing conscience, and directing your hearers to judge of their spiritual state, and preaching experimentally, which is the life and soul of preaching.

thatch of his hut on Salisbury Plain; by reading which, and prayer, he seemed to keep up a constant communion with God. The editor has been most agreeably reminded of this extraordinary man, by reading Mrs. Hannah More's pleasing little tract, called "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain." The first person he met with, as he was riding into the village of Cheverel to settle in that curacy, was this shepherd; who told him, in a conversation he had with him some time after, that taking the stranger to be the minister expected there, he could not help repeating to himself those words of St. Paul, Rom. x. 15, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

* A new edition of this book was printed in 1772, by the Rev. William Unwin, M.A., rector of Stock cum Ramsden, Essex.

I hope your zeal in disposing of the books* you speak of, was judicious. Some such books, though containing bad divinity, may be curious in an historical view, or throw some light into some parts of antiquity; and therefore deserve to be read and kept. I have often picked up a pearl from a dunghill, and so am less curious in my choice of books to read, than many others; and, indeed, than I ought to be, had I less time for reading. Some valuable anecdotes, from some very trifling books, have made my sermons more entertaining and instructive than otherwise they would have been; therefore it may be well to run over an indifferent book before it be slaughtered. An Index Expurgatorius is a dangerous thing.

I am, your faithful friend and servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER IV.

March 30, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad of your second curacy, as it enlarges your work, rather than as it increaseth your wages. I was lately reading of a clergyman in your county, who had two small livings, at which he officiated as you purpose doing. He went to the weak and old at each place; and the strong followed him reciprocally.

The plan of your introductory discourse, which you sent me, of "not seeking theirs, but them," 2 Cor. xii. 14, is extremely pertinent and good. A sermon on the spring, a few Sundays hence, as illustrating the spread of the gospel in the world—and the progress and nature of a work of grace in the heart—and the resurrection of the dead, may be very striking and useful. See Mark iv. 26—29. Isa. xxvi. 19. Solomon's Song ii. 11, 12. Men love sermons that come home to their business and bosoms.

I am very sensible of your weight of business; but you will not be disheartened, especially as you will, I hope, more and more see (in the mercantile style) that it answers very well. You know who could do all things εν Χριστω ενδυναμουντι, Phil. iv. 13, and there your eyes will be continually directed. Even St. Paul could not do without that; and with that who cannot do?

I know not what to say about extemporary preaching. It may on some accounts be desirable and useful; but I dare not encourage it in young divines. I never knew an instance of it but the preacher was careless in his studies, slovenly and incor-

* Two popish books the editor met with in a parochial visit, and which were replaced by others.

rect in his discourses; and, losing the habit of accurate composing, could never recover it afterwards. Yet I would by no means desire you to confine yourself entirely to your notes. When a thought strikes you, or something in your sermon seems to strike your hearers, you may add a few sentences, as you find matter arising in your mind; and if you are thoroughly master of your subject, and have a good deal of your sermon, especially the application of it, committed to memory, thus much will be easy, and you will not hesitate and appear at a loss. But suppose you preach at your new church sermons which you have delivered at Little Cheverel half a year ago; not exactly as written, but commit the substance, every leading thought, and the texts which you have introduced into them, to memory, and then enlarge *pro re natâ*. Or you may compose and write out one new sermon every week, and let it be preached at your churches alternately; and then on the other part of the day, have at the other church your plan, texts, and leading thoughts only written down, and discourse to your people from them. So that each place will have a complete, and a kind of extemporary discourse alternately. But then, if you do this as it ought to be done, it will very little lessen your labour: for it will require as much pains in studying your plan, texts, and subordinate thoughts, and putting them down, as in writing a sermon at large. But let me caution you never to venture without a finished discourse in your pocket, lest any indisposition of your own, or circumstance relating to the congregation, should disqualify you for ready conception and utterance.* I have known so many ministers become injudicious and unacceptable by a careless habit of composing, or rather of not composing at all, in their younger days, and in small country-places, that I make these concessions, guarded as they are, with fear. The other extreme is best for a young divine to err in. Besides, there is no way by which you will so speedily and effectually increase your fund of theological knowledge, as by accurate composures. Thus you will study your subject carefully, viewing and examining it on every side; consulting all the commentators you may have upon your text and parallel places, and reading what other divines (whose writings you may be possessed of) have said upon the subject. So that were you to read nothing for a whole week, but what you would read in this method (except history, classics, &c., by way of relaxation) I should commend your diligence and say, you had kept to the good maxim, *Hoc age*.

I am glad to hear of the encouragement you meet with.

* The editor once, and never but once, ventured into the pulpit without a finished discourse in his pocket. The consequence was, that on a neighbouring gentleman's coach coming, unexpectedly, very late to church, it threw him into so great a confusion, as to oblige him to conclude his discourse rather abruptly.

How happy are you in having such opportunities of preaching to those to whom the gospel (in our view of it) is a kind of novelty. Our dissenters, in general, have heard of it, till they nauseate it; so that there is little hope of its doing them any good. This leads so many of our divines to try what philosophy and abstract representations of virtue will do without the peculiarities of the gospel. But if they do good, it is more than I ever saw or heard of. God is wiser than men. And if his remedies will not do, men's will not; and the disease is incurable. However we must go on to try them, and wait on him for success.

I found lately, in the course of my reading, mention made of a Mr. Rowland Stedman, a native of Shropshire, who, in 1662, gave up his living of £300 per annum, at Oakingham, Berkshire, because he could not comply with the terms then required; who was an excellent preacher, and the author of several practical treatises. Is he an ancestor or relative of yours ?* I assure you I should think such a divine and confessor an honour to my name and family, and I believe you will think it so to yours. Of another pious minister I read that he found his labours had little effect upon his own parishioners, but much upon his occasional and accidental hearers. Of another, that being complained of by a neighbouring clergyman for drawing away his parishioners on a Sunday, he answered, "I have preached them here; let him, if he will, preach them back again." Old bishop Latimer told such a complaining divine, "Feed your flock better, and then they won't stray." Such hints as these, from eminent and experienced ministers, have always a great weight on my mind. In reading the lives of eminent men, you will do well to insert in a pocket-book, or vade-mecum, any hints of stories,† facts, or remarks, which you would wish to remember, or would be proper to quote in sermons or conversation. Unless your memory be much better than mine ever was, you will find this necessary.

I congratulate you on the approach of spring, when every

* He was born at Corfton, in the parish of Diddlebury, in Shropshire, 1630; admitted a commoner of Balliol College, Oxford, March 13, 1647, and the year following removed to University College. In 1655 he took his master's degree, and soon afterwards became minister of Hanwell, near Brentford, Middlesex, where continuing till 1660, he removed to Oakingham, in Berkshire, and from thence was ejected for nonconformity. He was afterwards chaplain to Philip Lord Wharton, died at his Lordship's seat at Woobourne, near Beaconsfield, Bucks, Sept. 14, 1673, and lies buried in the church there. See Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses, vol. ii. p. 381, and Lyson's Environs of London, vol. ii. p. 554. The editor believes he was nearly related to his great-grandfather Mr. John Stedman, who lived at Corfton, and was buried in the church at Diddlebury, April, 1699, ætatis suæ 43.

† Sometimes he tells these stories, and sayings of others, according as his text invites him; for them also men heed and remember better than exhortations; which though earnest, yet often die with the sermon, especially with country people, which are thick, and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them, but stories and sayings they will remember."—HERBERT'S COUNTRY PARSON.

scene will be enlivened around you, and a country village will become a kind of paradise. It gives me pleasure to think what favourable opportunities of usefulness you will have in your rural walks, to see your farmers and shepherds at work, and talking with them and their servants about their occupations, in an easy and natural way, grafting some religious hints upon it, directing them to spiritualize their labours, and rise to God, and Christ, and heaven, by their common occurrences. And while you exhort them in the words of Solomon, to "be diligent to know the state of their flocks, and to look well to their herds" (Prov. xxvii. 23), you will, like a good shepherd, take the hint yourself. May the dews of divine grace be largely diffused into you and your flock, that you may be adorned with all the beauty of Christian graces, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness!

I am, your affectionate and faithful humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER V.

June 10, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—The death of the old incumbent of Great Cheverel, is an affecting lesson to the laity, but especially to the clergy, which I pray God they may lay seriously to heart. I wish you may be continued in the curacy, provided the new rector should not choose to reside. Fellows of colleges, who have been many years immured in their colleges, are not always the most fit persons to be parish priests; not knowing well how to preach, or converse, or behave to common people, except they have a heart truly serious, and that will make up every other defect in country places.

I am glad you are pleased with the two volumes of Clubbe's* Tracts which I designed for your service, and beg your acceptance of them. His Sermon before the Sons of the Clergy at Ipswich, and the Letter to a Young Clergyman, are very excellent. His Tract on Infant Baptism is sensible and clear, and the others are entertaining, and indeed useful, for they expose the folly of many writers, especially on subjects of antiquity, and indeed of some of the clergy, who spend too much of their time in such studies.

I know not what History of England to recommend to you. Some are so large, some so short, and some so partial, it is hard to say which is best, or which is good. A general acquaintance with our history is very desirable. But it is of great importance to be acquainted with some periods of it, particularly the reformation, civil wars, and revolution. I know none better than

* Rector of Whatfield, in Suffolk.

Burnet's Abridgment of the Reformation, and his History of his own Times. Welwood's Memoirs is a good abridgment of our history from James I. to King William. I have heard a good character of Goldsmith's History, but have not seen it. But I would principally recommend to you to get some book of biography; especially the British Biography, which is very full and cheap, and the best thing of the kind I have seen. This will give you a good acquaintance with our history in general, with particular persons and their writings, and, above all, will furnish you with many little anecdotes and stories to insert in your sermons, which will entertain and edify your hearers. There is a book which I would recommend to you as extremely useful in this view, called "The Triumphs of Faith."

I am reading again Bennet's Christian Oratory, I suppose for about the tenth time. I hope you have got that book. I know not a better for any Christian, especially divines; as it contains so much devotion, piety, good sense, Christian experience, and great candour, carrying nothing to an extreme.

I am, your faithful friend,

JOB ORTON.

P.S. Dr. Adams spent two hours with me lately in his way home from London and Oxford. His behaviour was perfectly candid and obliging. He left your tutor, Mr. Griffith, well at Pembroke College.

LETTER VI.

August 19, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—I should have written to you long ago, had not my great weakness prevented me, owing to which I was obliged to drop all correspondence, but what I could carry on in short-hand.

I thank you for your very kind and friendly letter, and all the encouragements and consolation it suggests. It is not only a proof of your friendship to me, but an evidence that "the Lord hath given you the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to them that are weary;"* and in that view it gave me peculiar pleasure. The long continued dry and hot weather we have had, though so favourable to the earth, was injurious to me; weakened my little strength, and quite took away my spirits. I have been in a very languishing state since the end of June. Within a week past I have been considerably revived; though I have, and shall have, returns of my disorder, and my nerves continue in a most shattered condition; nor can I expect they will be much better, till we have cooler weather. My mind hath indeed been in a gloomy state, which I doubt not, as

* Isaiah l. 4.

your very kind letter suggests, is much owing to my corporal disorder; but when eternity seems just in view, conscience awakens and alarms; youthful sins, which have been deeply and daily mourned over before God, appear yet exceeding sinful; and the sins of a professor and a minister appear peculiarly heinous. A thousand defects and negligencies in ministerial work, and especially in the pastoral care, appear then great sins. You read my writings, and see my outside only; but know not "the plague of my heart,"* the sad remains of corruptions and sensual affections, distracted, cold devotions, and little languid love and zeal. Yet it hath been the main business of my life to do good, and I think my governing principle, to serve the Lord Christ. Worldly wealth, honour,† pleasure, and applause, I never sought. I have been endeavouring to serve my fellow-creatures while I had ability, and have been attempting it in my present state of silence, weakness, and obscurity; and though conscious of innumerable imperfections, this affords me some comfort. I have sometimes a cheerful hope; at other times it is weak and wavering, and those fears which have torment prevail.‡ But in the darkest seasons I keep looking out and crying to God for his pardon and help, that he would discover to me any latent hypocrisy or sin; and, if he seeth it good, dart a ray of light and peace into my soul. I place no dependence upon any works or worthiness of my own, but lie at the foot of the cross, as an humble penitent believer, and fixing all my dependence there.§ I write these things partly for your warning, partly for your encouragement, but chiefly that you may the

* 1 Kings viii. 38.

† A degree of Doctor in Divinity had been conferred upon Mr. Orton many years previously to his decease, but he would never permit himself to be addressed by that title, or prefix it to any of his writings.—Account by Kippis, in the Biograph. Britan. vol. v.

‡ 1 John iv. 18.

§ Sir John Hawkins, in his Life of Dr. Johnson, gives us the following account of that excellent man.—"In a visit, which I made him in consequence of a very pressing request to see me, I found him labouring under great dejection of mind.—He bade me draw near him, and said he wanted to enter into a serious conversation with me; and upon my expressing a willingness to join in it, he, with a look that cut me to the heart, told me that he had the prospect of death before him, and that he dreaded to meet his Saviour. I could not but be astonished at such a declaration, and advised him, as I had done once before, to reflect on the course of his life, and the services he had rendered to the cause of religion and virtue, as well by his example as his writings; to which he answered that he had written as a philosopher, but had not lived like one. In the estimation of his offences he reasoned thus—"Every man knows his own sins, and also, what grace he has resisted. But to those of others, and the circumstances under which they where committed, he is a stranger; he is, therefore, to look on himself as the greatest sinner he knows of." At the conclusion of this argument, which he strongly enforced, he uttered this passionate exclamation—"Shall I, who have been a teacher of others, myself be a castaway?"—Life, p. 563.

"Sometimes persons of melancholy and fearful temper, who yet have lived in all good conscience, and whose conduct, in every relation, has been singularly good, have fallen into such an opinion of themselves as hath embittered all their comforts, and made their very lives a burden to them. They have thought themselves what no one else could think them, the vilest of sinners; and have gone mourning all their days, when they have had the highest reason for calm content and joyful hope."

better know how to pray for me. I wish to know more clearly (and God can, if he sees good, show me) how far the body darkens the prospects of the soul, or how far remaining corruptions and failings occasion anxious fears. I daily pray, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me," Job x. 2. And I hope God will not deny a request which his word and Spirit dictate. I rejoice that your bow abides in strength, and that you have any encouragement in your labours. May the Lord increase it!

What glorious harvest weather! I hope you will preach your people a harvest sermon. What think you of Isaiah ix. 3 (middle clause) for a text, which plainly refers to the gospel? See ver. 1, 2. The joy of harvest great—reasonable, on account of plenty—good weather—freedom from enemies. But joy of the gospel greater—better blessings, relating to the soul and eternity—bought and purchased by Christ—freely bestowed, &c. All should rejoice in such a gospel, especially those who have felt its power. Excuse these hints.

This is the longest letter I have written for some time; and indeed writing at any time, especially now, is fatiguing to me.

I am, your faithful friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER VII.

October 16, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—My long illness this summer threw me so much behind-hand with my correspondents, that I have not yet been able to recover that punctuality which I should be glad to maintain. I bless God I have been in better health and spirits for three weeks past than for three months before, and indeed am now as well as I ever expect to be. But the wetness of the season is a hindrance to my riding, walking, writing, every thing. My mind is freer from tormenting fears; but either these bad nerves, or something worse, deprive me of those comfortable hopes I wish to enjoy. But the divine physician, whose regimen is always right, may see it best to keep some of his patients *low*. They may not bear a higher diet: probably the health of the soul may be best promoted by it; and then all will be well in the issue.

I rejoice in your encouragement in your pastoral visits. You have, I think, gone as far as you prudently can at first. As your intimacy with your people increases, they will be more open in conversation with you, and then you may properly put particular questions to them. For instance: "Do you pray in secret? With a form, and what form? or without?" So as to family prayer. Your method of lending books, &c., is very useful, as it will furnish you with some natural questions about their attention and improvement; which will not appear forced and lugged in, and so not terrify them or appear imper-

tinent in you. It would be well to pray with families, wherever you think it can prudently be done; and hints may be dropped in prayer inoffensively, which may show them their duty. Mr. Henry saith, "Prayer may preach." And I have often found persons observing and improving such hints, which could not be given in an address to them without danger of offence.* But caution is necessary here, not to let them see too plainly what you think of their state. This may be dangerous both ways. Petitions grounded on the treachery of the heart, the frequency and danger of self-deceit, and for divine search, illumination, and guidance, are always proper and useful; except you have reason to believe your friends are established Christians. Even common appellations, as thy servant, thy handmaid, may in some cases do harm, as you know, and will know, how prone persons are to catch at any shadow of hope without penitence and faith. This person, or this our friend, is less dangerous language. It is good to pray particularly for children and servants in a family. This pleases and edifies them, and may suggest useful hints to them and their superiors; but to be too particular is wrong. I think it a very useful way to inquire of the younger children whether they remember the text of the last Sunday's sermon (as their parents should be desired to teach it them): and of the elder children, whether they remember any thing of the sermon. When they expect such an inquiry, they will be more attentive, and then you may familiarly talk over something of the sermon with them, particularly what was most suited to their capacity and circumstances. I assure you I have often learned much from the answers of little children to such queries; learned what part of the sermon they best understood, were affected with; what kind of sentiments or language struck them; and so knew how better to preach to children, that is, to nine parts in ten of every auditory; for so many are children in understanding. To talk over with them any remarkable occurrence in the parish or neighbourhood, as the death of a child—sudden death—the season of the year—or uncommon phenomena, may be useful; or sometimes to give each a text of scripture (always a short one) to remember and think of against the next meeting, and then talk it over with them; especially a text suited to any particular failing in them, or circumstance of their family; as against lying, idleness, love of finery, or slovenliness, sleeping at church, or playing on the sabbath; or suppose once in a year you were to preach a sermon to children, and give notice of it the preceding Sunday. To have your notes with you in the pulpit, yet to enlarge as occasion may require is best. When pious, pertinent thoughts

* "I have often," says one, "learnt my duty from Mr. Orton's prayers;" when he had been on a visit at his house, and joined with him in his family worship.—KIPPIS's ACCOUNT.

arise, pursue them as you find matter flow easily. Application is the life and soul of preaching; warm addresses according to your hearers' different characters, stations, and circumstances, will be useful. After your pastoral visits or catechizing, keep hints of what you learn and observe, which may direct the strain or pointing of your public discourses. Teaching is one of the best ways of learning; and there is in a minister's work, as in matter, action and reaction. His own soul and his people's will be thus reciprocally influenced. Perhaps nothing is more necessary than frequently and plainly to caution persons, especially the sick, against laying an undue stress on the Lord's supper, having wrong notions of it, and expecting from it what it was never designed to produce or convey. I have known some worthy clergymen complain of their great embarrassment in this respect. And as it is very grievous to have any thing like arguing and disputing with the sick and dying, this should often be done in the pulpit and conversation when they are well. But enough of these subjects.

I am truly concerned on account of Dr. Stonhouse's mournful accounts from India, and very tenderly sympathize with him under this severe trial; knowing how much a person of his delicate frame and irritable nerves must suffer by so unexpected an event.* But I pray and hope that God will support him, and enable him still to go on with his Master's work. An accession of spiritual children, begotten in Christ Jesus by the gospel preached by him, will be his best relief and cordial under this heavy affliction; and in the prospect and hope of this I trust he will persevere. God often calls his ministers to peculiar trials, that he may exhibit them as examples of patience, meekness, serenity, and even cheerfulness, and lead them to recommend and enforce their public exhortations thereby. It is good to have this in our thoughts in our afflicted seasons, and to do honour to our religion and profession by a resemblance to our divine Master. To his assistance, compassion, and blessing I heartily recommend him.

You will do well to make Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, translated from the Latin by Maclaine, familiar to you, as it is, I think, the best on the subject; and Dr. Jortin, who was an excellent judge of a book of that kind, commends it as the most honest, impartial, and comprehensive of any he had met with.†

You have my best wishes and prayers for your good success.

I am, your affectionate friend, &c.,

JOB ORTON.

* The death of his eldest son.

† "Mosheim's Compendium," says Bp. Warburton, "is excellent, the method admirable, in short, the only one deserving the name of an Ecclesiastical History." As a Compendium, the editor prefers Dr. Gregory's History of the Christian Church from the earliest periods to the present time; 2 vols. 8vo.

LETTER VIII.

DEAR SIR,—It gave me great pleasure to receive a letter from you with so much short-hand in it, as it showed me you had applied closely to it, and that with a little daily care you will soon be master of it. You must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the prepositions, terminations, and symbolical and arbitrary marks, as well as the meaning of the alphabet. You will find it of signal use to yourself in saving time and labour, and making your correspondence with some of your friends more easy; and for want of it, you are spoiling a good hand, and using yourself to so many abbreviations that it is not easy to read them. I hope I shall not puzzle you too much with what I now send.

Your story of the good woman at Great Cheverel is delightful and full of instruction. It shows how absurd, ungrounded, uncharitable, and wicked it is to say of parishes and congregations where the gospel, in our view of it, hath not been preached, "There is no religion there, not one serious person, not one pious soul." See John i. 46—48.

I am sensible that too many people have strange and dangerous notions of the Lord's supper; and I see not what can be done, but to endeavour to give them juster and better notions of it. It may not be amiss, whenever you administer that ordinance, to have something in your sermon adapted to rectify their mistakes, as well as to warm their hearts and confirm good resolutions. A collection of texts for this purpose may be made in the course of your reading. But I need not say to you that the subjects of your discourses on these occasions should be peculiarly evangelical; something relating to Christ, his undertaking, design, death, love, and the like.

A set of yearly sermons to young people, to parents and children (which you have thoughts of preaching, and of which you ask my advice) may probably have this inconvenience attending it, that in a few years you may be at a loss for fresh materials. It may be done very well for a year or two. But it seems to me a better way to introduce these subjects by preaching upon some scripture histories; as, for instance, what is said of Abraham's commanding his children and household to keep the way of the Lord; of Joshua's resolution to serve the Lord with his house; of David's instructions to his son Solomon, and the like; the early piety of Joseph, Obadiah, Jabez, Solomon, Timothy, and especially our Lord Jesus Christ. These histories are striking, and will at once explain and enforce the duties you recommend; and so with regard to all other relative duties. I see no objection to the specimen you sent me of your discourse on "Christ the pearl of price," Matt. xiii. 45, 46; only let me

recommend you to be careful that when you handle a metaphorical subject, you do not strain it too far; but keep as much as possible to the precise idea of the inspired writer. You will observe, in the course of your reading, how often metaphors and figures are mingled and confounded; and by some good writers too, for want of keeping one single precise idea always in their mind. You will excuse, I know, these hints. A little habit and practice will make it easy to you to avoid such errors. Your Cheverel peasants may not perceive them; but a clergyman should strive so to write and speak as to be intelligible to the plainest; to give no cause of censure to the judicious, or ill-natured critics; and to be acceptable to all.

You observe that bishop Clayton, in his Letters to his nephew, recommends Marshall's Sermons as preferable to Sherlock's and Atterbury's for pathos and for lively and warm applications. Upon seeing this recommendation I bought the three volumes; but am much disappointed in them. They are very judicious; and some of them very serious; the language is neat and elegant, but the main thing which they appear to me to want, is that very thing for which the bishop recommends them. But his ideas of application and mine very widely differ. However, I am reading them with great pleasure, and I hope some benefit; though I should not choose to preach in his strain.

Have you ever seen and read Jenks's Meditations? If you have not, I suppose you may borrow them of Dr. Stonhouse. They are very serious and excellent things, on a great variety of subjects; almost each of which contains the substance and heads of a sermon, and will furnish excellent materials for your compositions for the pulpit, though his style is none of the best. Merivale's Daily Devotions for the Closet I have, and think them excellent. The author was a most worthy, learned, and pious man, a native of Northampton, and of the same class with me at the academy, and afterwards divinity tutor at the academy at Exeter. Sandercock's Sermons, in two volumes, are lively, judicious, serious, and familiar.

Had you looked into your lexicons for the meaning of the word *chrematistic*, you would have found that it signifies the art of getting and saving money, from χρημα, money, substance, wealth, &c.; χρηματισθεντος hath a different sense in the New Testament, and means, warned of God in a dream. Where you are in doubt about any such words, never rest till you have obtained some knowledge of them. By this method you will increase your stock of learning, and with comparatively little trouble.

I have little to say of myself. I bless God, I am in pretty good spirits, but weak and unfit for any business. The late wet and windy weather hath been prejudicial to me, by hindering my riding, and depriving me of comfortable sleep. But I would

be thankful that I am able to read, and sometimes to write a little to my friends, and so, I hope, am not quite useless in the world. I greatly want a heart to improve solitude and infirmities better, to feel more of the love of God, and submission to him, and better hopes as to futurity. In this view I doubt not but you will continue your prayers for me. May the great Head of the church increase all your gifts and graces, and make you abundantly useful to all the people committed to your charge!

I am, yours affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

P.S. November 6, 1772, which reminds me of the day of the year on which Dr. Doddridge died. The recollection of which event affects me with deep humility, and at the same time with much thankfulness. I wish his Life may be of use to you. It cost me immense pains, and helped to break my constitution. But I hope it hath done, and will do, some good; though those who, I think on many accounts, should have paid the greatest attention to it, have regarded it least.

LETTER IX.

March 27th, 1772.

DEAR SIR.—You have, I presume, had some account from Dr. Stonhouse of his expedition into Kent, and of his reception there. He is now in London, and I suppose his time is very much taken up amidst the hurries, visits, and forms of the great city. I envy not his occasional residence there, much less the state of our brethren who have parishes or congregations in London; for they have very little time to command, and, I fear, are so much taken up with avocations, too trifling in themselves, but, considering their situation, necessary to be attended to, that their minds are too much diverted from pastoral duty, and the proper business of their important stations. The country parish priests are much more happy if they understand and love their work, and have much more agreeable prospects of usefulness among the people committed to their care. And though they do not make so splendid a figure in this world, yet, other things being equal, they will make a much more respectable one in that which is to come.

I am sorry you meet with so much discouragement from your new parishioners. But if you did not expect it, you were too sanguine, and did not sufficiently consider the state of that parish. It was, I suppose, like Solomon's field of the slothful, all overgrown with thorns and nettles, the fences broken down or out of repair, and all the marks of negligence and its bad consequences appearing in it. Were you to take a farm in that

condition, you would not expect to see it become fruitful and beautiful all at once, or with the utmost pains you could take, in a few months, or even years. But the minds of sinners are more untractable than a neglected farm. The weeds of sin are so many, and have taken such deep root, that it is not easy to eradicate them, much less to destroy the seeds. It is hard to break up the fallow ground of hearts, which has been long uncultivated, Hosea x. 12. But the hand of the diligent will in time do great things, and the blessing of the Lord, which will attend it (if his diligence extends to prayer as well as labour), can break through the greatest difficulties. You will, no doubt, study some awful subjects to awaken and convince obstinate sinners; yet not dwell too much upon these, but try to draw them at times with the "cords of love," and the endearing, striking motives of a glorious gospel. When you hear of any of them behaving ill, you will take an opportunity of talking privately to them. But then I think it will be best not to enter too largely upon their particular sins and faults (else they will probably be displeased), but represent to them in general the evil of sin, the temporal, spiritual, and eternal misery, which men are bringing upon themselves and their children by vicious courses; and put into their hands some little tract against the vice which they are guilty of, or the whole or part of Dr. Stonhouse's Admonitions against Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and Drunkenness.* If you have any serious, judicious Christians in either of your parishes, who are acquainted with those persons who give you so much concern, endeavour to prevail upon them to talk a little seriously to them at proper times; for in many cases a hint of advice given by one of the laity hath more effect, and is better received, than when it comes from a clergymen; as they will think the latter is only acting *ex officio*, and that his exhortation doth not so much proceed from a real concern for their reformation and happiness. You will, I doubt not, consider that your case is the very case, in some degree, of every faithful minister of Jesus Christ. It was the case of the holy apostles (2 Cor. xii. 20, 21), and was the case of their Lord and ours himself. And though it shows a right disposition when a minister's heart is grieved and humbled in such circumstances, yet he should not be discouraged, but proceed with so much the more vigour in his work, comforting himself with this thought, that God may at length awaken the most careless, and humble the most obstinate sinners; or that something we say to them may stick by them, and produce some good effect hereafter, perhaps when we are removed to another station or another world; that others receive benefit by our labours; that all are not disobedient to the word and unfruitful under our ministry; and that we shall be a sweet savour to God,

* This little tract is in the catalogue of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

accepted and approved of him, in them that perish, as well as in them that are saved, 2 Cor. ii. 15; and that God will reward his ministers in proportion to their pains and diligence, and not their success. In the meantime, such events are of use to ministers themselves, to humble them, make them more watchful and zealous, and more earnest in prayer for all-conquering grace.*

I am now reading the works of Mr. William Perkins, an eminent tutor and divine at Cambridge in Queen Elizabeth's reign. They are three volumes in folio, and I have got through one of them. What leads me more particularly to read him was, that his elder brother was one of my ancestors, from whom I am in a direct line, by my mother's side, descended. I think him an excellent writer; his style is the best of any of that age, or the next, and many passages in his writings are equal to those of the best writers in modern times. He is judicious, clear, full of matter, and deep Christian experience. He wrote all his works with his left hand, being lame of his right, and died about forty-four. I could wish all ministers, especially young ones, would read him, as they would find large materials for composition. He hath some tracts against the papists; appears to have been a pretty high Calvinist, but he hath many admirable things in practical divinity. His works are little known in England, but they are still in estimation in Germany, many of them being written in elegant Latin, and others translated into German. Some account of his life may be seen in Clark's Lives of Eminent Men. He was esteemed a puritan, and met with some difficulties on that account.† As a specimen of Perkins's manner, I send you the following quotations. Speaking of St. Paul's labouring in vain, he adds, "It may be demanded what must be done when the labours of our calling are in vain? Answer. We must follow the command and calling of God,

* Mr. Orton once wrote to an eminent divine of the established church in the following manner. "You say you do no good by preaching. This is talking weakly; I had almost used a harder word. Should you not be chided for it? 'Why do you leave off preaching?' said old Bishop Latimer to a complainer like you. He answered, 'Because I do no good, my Lord.' The bishop replied, 'That brother, is a naughty, a very naughty reason.'—You do not know what good you have done, are doing, may yet do, and even after you are dead. No good man preaches, I am confident, without doing some good, and more than he knows of, or will know of, till the great discovering day. To have done our best is moral merit; and God will graciously accept and reward it. What great good did our Master himself do! 'Who hath believed his report?' Isa. liii. 1. Who would have thought that *you* should ever have talked of doing no good by preaching, when God hath done you so much honour already in your clerical character? I am ashamed of you; and almost angry with you. Labour more, and pray more still. 'If the iron be blunt,' as Solomon says, 'then put to more strength,' Eccles. x. 10. If you begin to be lukewarm, whatever your motive is, it cannot be a good one. I am not clear that I ever did much *lasting* good in my life; yet I do not repent my attempts. I am humbled and ashamed daily that they were not more and better. Remember that preaching is of God's own appointment."

† Mr. Granger, in his Biographical History, says—"He was deprived by Archbishop Whitgift for being a puritan. But his great learning, worth, and influence made the high party ashamed and afraid to proceed to any violent measures with him."

whether we have good success or no, and whatever comes of it. Though Paul feared his labour was vain, yet still he laboured. When Peter had laboured all night and caught nothing, at the command of Christ he saith, At thy word will I cast out my net. And thus to do, whatever follows, is true wisdom, and the fear of God. For it must suffice us, that the work we take in hand is pleasing to God, and though it should be in vain with respect to men, it is not so before God. This every man must remember in his place and calling, for the establishment of his mind against all events.

"Ministers are to temper their gifts and speech to the condition of their hearers. The Corinthians were babes in Christ, and Paul fed them with milk. To the Jews he became a Jew, &c. For this cause it were to be wished that catechizing were more used than it is by our ministers: for our people are for the most part rude and uninstructed. A sermon to such persons is like a great loaf set before a child. It is no disgrace for learned ministers in a plain and familiar manner to catechize. This is to lay the foundation, without which all labour in building is vain. In much hearing they learn little, because they know not the grounds of doctrine, that are usual in all sermons. It is a fault in many, that they love to hear sermons which are beyond their reach, in which they stand and wonder at the preacher, and plain preaching is little respected of such." You will judge of his style and manner by these quotations. I have lately found in his works an analysis and harmony of the whole bible for the use of students at Cambridge.

I think I have now paid you in your own coin, and filled my paper to the utmost. If any thing be acceptable and useful to you in its contents, I shall be glad. I am thankful for your prayers, which are mutual. Think of me, as laid aside from public work, and almost useless; and learn from it to work while it is day, before disability comes, or the night, when no man can work. And may God work effectually in you, with you, and by you!

I am, your sincere and affectionate friend,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER X.

April 17, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—Lately reading Chaucer's Character of a good Parson, as published by Dryden, and recollecting some things in your last letter about your method of preaching, induces me to transcribe the following lines, and send them to you.

He bore his great commission in his look,
But sweetly tempered awe ; and soften'd all he spoke.
He preach'd the joys of heav'n and pains of hell;
And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal ;
But on eternal mercy lov'd to dwell.
He taught the gospel rather than the law ;
And forc'd himself to drive ; but lov'd to draw.
For fear but frightens minds ; but love, like heat,
Exhales the soul sublime, to seek her native seat.
To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard :
Wrapt in his crimes, against the storm prepar'd ;
But when the milder beams of mercy play,
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.
Lightnings and thunder (heaven's artillery),
As harbingers before th' Almighty fly ;
Those but proclaim his style, and disappear ;
The stiller sound succeeds ; and God is there.

There is much truth and weight in these lines, and my own experience confirms the propriety and importance of attending to them. I am glad to find that you preach to large congregations. But it is not easy to know what good is done by our preaching. If we had not ground to hope that more good is done than appears in general, it would be very discouraging. But great modesty, diffidence, or some other principle prevents our people from letting us know how they like our sermons, and what good they get by them. Besides, we are sowing seed which may seem lost, but may only lie dormant for a while, yet may grow and spring up and bear fruit hereafter, perhaps some years hence, perhaps not till we are dead. I am glad you do not perplex yourself on this head, as indeed you should not ; but while you endeavour to do your duty faithfully, leave the event to God. Yet, as it is very desirable to know what success attends our labours, every prudent method should be taken to know it. This is indeed a very nice point. One cannot make a direct inquiry whether our services are useful, or even acceptable, without appearing vain, and to court applause. Yet perhaps it may be proper to introduce in your visits some conversation upon the subject of your last sermon, and to remind the people of it. This may be done without any breach of modesty, and may lead them to open their hearts freely on the subject; and thus we may judge how far they understood and relished what was said; and whether they were the better for it. And by this means we may preach over the same truths to particular persons or families in private, perhaps with more force and success than in the pulpit. Among the poor and plain people, you may be quite free and open on this head, and may ask them whether they understood such and such a subject. They will not suspect you of vanity, or any low ends ; though probably some of the higher ranks might, among whom vanity is so prevalent. Here wisdom is profitable to direct, and a person must judge by the tempers and characters of those about him.

I was glad to hear of Dr. Stonhouse's safe arrival at Teeson, after so perilous a journey. I almost envy him the company of Mrs. Bouverie and her agreeable family. Has he told you how he held a conventicle at her house on the Sunday evening, where some well-disposed persons in the neighbourhood were invited to hear him read a sermon? This was in character—being "instant in season and out of season." I am often comforted by Rom. xi. 2, 4, God hath many hidden ones, even among the great as well as the small.

The Book of Devotions, which you saw at my house, was published by William Austin, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, who was a papist in Charles the First's time. You will see his name and a letter to him in Howell's Familiar Letters (book i. sect. v. letter xii.), and some account of him in Granger's Biographical History. It was reformed and purged from the popish tenets by Dr. Hickes, and afterwards by Mr. Dorrington, and great use hath been made of it by many other devotional writers. It contains such noble and sublime strains of devotion, as, I think, are not to be met with any where but in the bible. So devout may a Papist be. He wrote some other pieces, and died about the year 1638.

Reading lately in one of my old favourite books (Bolton*), I found in it this remark:—that St. Paul, addressing himself to the churches, wishes them "grace and peace from God and our Lord Jesus Christ;" but to Timothy and Titus, who were young divines, he wishes them "grace, mercy, and peace;" intimating how much they of all men stood in need of divine mercy, on account of the very important office they sustained, and the duties incumbent on ministers. It is a very useful hint, and deserves serious consideration. Bolton was a fellow of Brasenose college, Oxford; a divine of the church of England, and of great loyalty. His writings are very valuable, but sell now very cheap. I gave eighteen pence for his works, and found them a good bargain. I am always glad to hear from you, and am, Your affectionate servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XI.

August 24, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—I was very glad to hear of your safe arrival at Cheverel, and of the agreeable circumstances which attended

* Character of Bolton by Dr. Doddridge. "Bolton had been a notorious sinner: reclaimed by great work of terror; therefore excellent both for conviction and consolation. His style rather inclining to bombast, yet many expressions truly great and magnificent: the beauties of imagination especially apparent in his Four Last Things. But his most useful treatises are his Directions for Comfortably Walking with God, and his Instructions for Comforting Afflicted Consciences. There we have the traces of a soul most intimately acquainted with God." *M.S.*

your return to it. The kindness of Providence in preserving us in our journies, and guarding us in our going out and coming in, demands a very serious and grateful acknowledgment, and lays us under fresh obligations to be active in the service of the bountiful and gracious Preserver of men. I need not inform you that there is a wide difference between the formal acknowledgment of the divine care, which is often found even in the worst of men, and that lively gratitude and quick sense of obligation which I fear is not often found in the hearts of good men. We are too prone to forget *common* mercies. It is therefore desirable, after a long and various journey, seriously to recollect the several stages, circumstances, and occurrences of it, that we may be particular in our thanksgivings, and more active and zealous in serving our gracious Protector. When I was in my better days, I used to spend about one month in a year in visiting my relations in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, being seldom from home at any other time.* The Sunday after my return I generally preached upon some subject that led me to take notice of the circumstances through which I had passed; and I found these discourses were peculiarly agreeable to my people, and were perhaps as useful as any I preached. As a specimen, I recollect having preached on those occasions from these texts, Ps. xxxv. 10 (former part), Ps. xxxvii. 27, xci. 11, cxvi. 9; Prov. xxvii. 8, against unnecessary journies and visits.† Isa. xliii. 2; Dan. v. 23; Acts v. 20, xxvi. 22, xxviii. 15 (latter part); Rom. i. 11, xv. 29, xv. 32; 2 Cor. vii. 3, xii. 21; Phil. i. 22; 1 Thess. iii. 8; 3 Epist. of John 4, ibid. 6. You will excuse my mentioning these texts, as you may perhaps think it worth your while, if Providence spare your life, to handle some of them on such occasions.

I presume, that after you have considered the *mercies* of your late journey, you have been carefully reviewing the *expenses* of it. And unless you have been more frugal than I used to be, have found the expense hath been great; and some articles have been incurred which ought to have been avoided. Excuse me, my dear sir, if I should have any fears about you, lest you should contract an habit of not calculating, or forgetting, what it will cost you to gratify the feelings of good nature, to indulge your fancy, or to please your relations and friends. And let me beseech you to labour this point with all your might, to keep exact accounts of all your expenses, especially to mark all superfluous and unnecessary articles, and to keep a strict guard upon your conduct and inclination. It will require, in a person of your temper, no little self-denial to do this, and to act as such a calculation and recollection will suggest to you that you should have acted. I have known instances among your clergy

* Mr. Orton was never in London in his life.

† See Discourses on Practical Subjects, vol. i. page 163.

and ours, of those who have, by thoughtlessness and want of keeping accounts, exposed themselves, their profession and function, to contempt, and thereby greatly lessened their esteem and usefulness. Shall I mention to you a recent instance of this kind, which presented itself to me but the last week? Our good friend, Mr. Robins, of West Bromwich, came here to represent the case of a dissenting minister of his acquaintance, who hath always been an easy-tempered, thoughtless man, who had not courage and self-denial enough to say "No, I cannot afford it," when he should, and might justly and honourably have said it. He hath a wife, many small children, and is so deeply in debt, though he hath a pretty good salary, that unless his friends can help him he must go to gaol, lose his place, salary, and usefulness, and his wife and children come to the parish. I hope Mr. R. will get him money sufficient to set him free from his present difficulties. But, I fear, though he promises very fair, that he is one of that sort of whom Solomon says, "If thou help him, thou must do it yet again," Prov. xix. 19. There needs no application of this melancholy story but the old adage, "Happy is he whom other men's harms do make to beware." I know you will excuse these hints from a friend, who interests himself sincerely and tenderly in all that concerns you, and would not have your good to be evil spoken of, or your usefulness any way lessened. I hope, therefore, you will particularly attend to that part of the good man's character, that "he guides his affairs with discretion," Ps. cxii. 5,* and "gives no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully," 1 Tim. v. 14.

One of my young friends, who hath been at Oxford at the installation of Lord North as chancellor of that university, spent a day or two with me last week, and showed me a very great curiosity. It is a circular letter addressed to the clergy by one Dr. Trusler, who lives in London; containing proposals to furnish them with sermons from our best divines, and some never published nor preached, at one shilling for each sermon, engraven on copper plates, that they may look like a manuscript, and that persons who can see the preacher's notes from the gallery may suppose them to be his own hand-writing. This is a new and fine contrivance, and what a clergyman (who wants no such helps) properly calls, "A help for the lame and the lazy."†

* See Psalm cxii. 5, in the version of Dr. Brady and Mr. Tate, which gives a beautiful sense to that text, though the Common Prayer-Book version is very instructive: "He will guide his words with discretion."

"His liberal favours he extends,
To some he gives, to others lends:
Yet what his charity impairs,
He saves by prudence in affairs." TATE AND BRADY.

† But hark—the doctor's voice—
He hails the clergy; and defying shame,

I am glad you have been reading over again Archbishop Secker's Sermons; which are very excellent, though his style is none of the best. They are much more evangelical than the sermons of most of the clergy; and from them you may collect many excellent materials for your compositions. He retained a good deal of the spirit which he imbibed at Tewkesbury; where he received a considerable part of his education under Mr. Jones, who was a very able tutor.

Since I began this letter, Dr. Johnstone,* who has been at Hagley some days, informs me that he thinks Lord Lyttelton can live but a very short time. I do not find that he has any apparent bad disorder, but is sinking under the weight of domestic sorrows. So little can his wealth, honour, title, palace, park, literary reputation, and high character throughout Europe support him under his afflictions. What a melancholy proof of the truth of Solomon's observation, that "all is vanity."†

I have lately sent a small tract to the press, containing three discourses on Christian Zeal;‡ which I shall beg your acceptance of as soon as they are published. I shall be thankful if Providence makes me an instrument of doing good in this way, while I am disabled from appearing in the pulpit. I heartily wish you success in all your pious and benevolent attempts to do good, and am,

Your affectionate friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. The young lady's verses upon Dr. Stonhouse are elegant and pretty:§ but he will not plume himself upon them. Allow-

> Announces to the world his own and theirs.
> He grinds divinity of other days
> Down into modern use; transforms old print
> To zig-zag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
> Of gallery critics by a thousand arts.—
> Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware?
> Oh name it not in Gath!—it cannot be,
> That grave and learned clerks should need such aid.
> He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
> Assuming thus a rank unknown before,
> Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church.
>
> COWPER'S TASK.

* An eminent physician, late of Kidderminster, now of Worcester.

† His lordship died the next day.

‡ At a time when many valuable treatises had been published in defence of toleration and liberty, Mr. Orton thought there was great room to complain of the want of zeal for support and advancement of real practical religion, and for the good of souls. To revive, therefore, this zeal, was the object of these discourses.—KIPPIS'S ACCOUNT. See vol. i. p. 491.

§ Epitre au Dr. Stonhouse, sur les Sermons de M. Saurin:—

> Ces divines ardeurs, cette sainte éloquence,
> Ces sublimes pensées, ces conceptions immenses,
> Ces essors évangéliques, cette humilité profonde,
> Cette connoissance unie à ce mépris du monde,
> Cet horreur du vice, cet amour de la vertu,
> Cette extréme soumission à la volonté de Dieu,

ance must be made for the *poetiça licentia.* The compliments of our friends do us no harm, but good, when we improve them by vigorous endeavours to be what they suggest we already are.

LETTER XII.

Dear Sir,—I am very glad to hear that you are come to a resolution to have nothing to do with Mr. * * * in the way of correspondence or intimacy. And I hope you will extend your resolution to all men of that sort, be they ever so pious and zealous. Serious young men, struck with the appearance of piety and zeal, are not sufficiently cautious of those in whom they see them; enter into acquaintance and correspondence with them too soon and too closely, and thereby suffer many inconveniences. "Beware of men,"* is a good caution in itself, and it is our Master's too. My reason for this advice is plain. —You are not likely to do Mr. * * * any good. There is no mending wrong heads, especially when they are influenced by what they think a zeal for God, and imagine that their good intentions will justify, and even sanctify, all their imprudence and irregularities. You never can make him see that he is acting wrong and imprudently. You may confute such men,

Cette heureuse indifference pour un monde incertain,
Cette compassion pour les maux du genre humain,
Cet amour, et cette crainte de l'éternel Createur,
Cette parfaite espérance dans le sang du Rédempteur;
Enfin, ces grandes idées——ce langage divin——
Qui charme, qui enleve, qui transporte en Saurin,
J'admire en le lisant ces beautés éclatantes,
En t'ecoutant, docteur, les memes beautés m'enchantent,
Semblable au prophête qui, la sainte ecriture dit,
Laisse[1] à son successeur son manteau et son esprit.

H. M.

Thus translated:—

That warmth divine, that holy eloquence,
Those thoughts sublime, conceptions so immense,
That deep humility,———
That knowledge and contempt of earthly things,
That dread of vice, of virtue such a love,
That true submission to the will above,
That calm indifference for this changing scene,
That pity for the woes of mortal men,
That love and fear of the eternal Good,
That perfect hope in the Redeemer's blood,
Those great ideas, language so divine,
Which charms, exalts, transports us in Saurin:
In reading him these beauties still appear,
In hearing thee these beauties charm mine ear;
Like to that prophet, who the scriptures say,
His cloak and spirit left, then winged to heaven his way.

[1] 1 Kings ii. 13. * Matt. x. 17.

but you can never convince them. Another substantial reason why you should decline all correspondence with him is, that you will be likely to be a sufferer by him. Not that I suppose he will corrupt you, or lead you into any of his irregularities; but these sort of divines will never be easy, except those who they think are pious will join in their measures and approve them. If you join in them, you hurt your own credit and usefulness, and the peace of your own mind; and your name and example will be considered and quoted as a sanction for all their irregularities. If you do not join in them, they will censure and misrepresent you, yea, and treat you worse than they would a mere formalist. I have seen many instances, and felt some of the effects of this kind of zeal, though it no way hurt me. Several preachers and others of this stamp, with whom I had not the least acquintance, and never saw till I came to this town, used to call upon me, supposing me, I imagine, according to their ideas, to be sound in the faith, and a well-wisher to their designs. But when they found I would not run all their lengths, and discouraged their proceedings (especially their rash and uncharitable way of speaking and judging of others, particularly their censures of all the clergy who were not Calvinists, however pious, worthy, and useful), they began to think evil of me, and now, to my great satisfaction, I see none of them. I shall not forget the advice which a venerable old man of Northampton, with his point-collar-band, once gave me concerning such persons, "Neither bless them at all, nor curse them at all."*

Mr. * * *, the rector of * * *, your friend's acquaintance, and whom he so much admires, is undoubtedly a man of good sense and abilities; but he appears to me to think these things have nothing to do with religion. I once saw one of his sermons, in which were some good and striking remarks, but little or no judgment. The subject of it was concerning the influences of the Holy Spirit: but he quoted a variety of texts at random, most of them only applicable to the apostles, as a slight attention to the context would have shown him; but he applied them without distinction to all true Christians; and from thence he drew many absurd consequences, and injudicious hearers might have drawn a great many more.

I cannot think Mr. * * * (the other clergyman you speak of) at all justified in his excursion to B**, because he thinks the proper minister of that parish is negligent in the discharge of his duty. If that were a reason for transgressing all rule and order, it would hold good in so many cases, as would produce universal confusion and disorder. Another clergyman may think it his duty to go into neighbouring parishes to preach against the methodists, or those that are so called. Another might go

* If such preachers do good, I shall rejoice, and say of them, as Mr. Philip Henry did of Lambert's soldiers, "Lord, own them, if they truly own thee."—*Life*, p. 73.

and preach against the Athanasian creed, or some other parts and passages of the liturgy, as several of them have lately and warmly written against them. And what disturbance, uneasiness, and mischief would be the consequence of such a conduct. If it is vindicable in Mr. * **'s case, it is vindicable in others and all parish order and regularity would be at an end. Even St. Paul himself, with all his apostolic authority and endowments, would not go into another man's line. See 2 Cor. x. 12, to the end of the chapter. Where you may see what St. Paul was, and what Mr. *** and every wise clergyman ought to be. God is the God of order and not of confusion* in all the churches of the saints: and it is our rule to do all things decently and in order.

My Book of Sermon Plans, which you desire an account of, was kept without much order. Having procured a proper book for the purpose, I divided each page of it into two columns. When any text of scripture struck me, which I thought it necessary to preach upon, I wrote it at the top of the page between two red lines, and left the whole of that column, to add a division, thoughts, texts, anecdotes, &c., that occurred in thinking of it, and in the course of my reading. And then, when I was at a loss for a text, I had recourse to this book. In reading practical writers, especially Mr. Henry's Expositions, I found many texts, and plans upon them, which I inserted there; and I added a reference to the authors, if the books were my own, where I might find some illustration of them; if the book belonged to some other person, I then transcribed the hints into the Book of Plans. The remarks in the bible which you saw lie upon my desk were only hints of different interpretations, or the true sense. I also marked the texts I had preached upon, in the margin, thus—No. 1468, opposite to Acts viii. 39. This number corresponded with the same at the beginning of the sermon, so that I could readily turn to it.

I was much concerned to hear of the death of Mr. Love,† Dr. Stonhouse's curate at Bristol; which is a great and irreparable loss to the doctor and to the church, as he was an admirable preacher. Considering his truly serious, and at the same time his rational and catholic disposition, his removal, especially in the morning of his days, is very much to be regretted. The doctor is deeply affected with the event.‡ What a different figure will such a man make in the other world to those clergymen, who may fill up some of the higher offices of the church; who, perhaps, with much learned lumber in their heads, neglect

* Ἀκαταστασιας. Examine the emphasis of that word; men who will not keep order, place, rank, &c.—Mr. Orton.

† Mr. Love was a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, master of arts, and one of the minor canons of Bristol cathedral. He was curate to Dr. Stonhouse for some years, when he was Lecturer of All Saints in Bristol, and died Oct. 18, 1773, aged 29.

‡ Doctor Stonhouse made a collection from a few friends, and erected a very elegant

their duty, devote themselves to luxury and dissipation, and take pains to lessen the credit, influence, and usefulness of those who make it the labour and end of their lives to save themselves and those that hear them.*

I desire to bless God that my spirits have been tolerably good for some weeks past though not without some depressing intervals. I am seldom free from pain, but I would be thankful that it is not violent. May God enable you to improve health and vigour while it continues, that you may have comfortable reflections and agreeable prospects, when the days of darkness come upon you, which may be many. Continue your good wishes and prayers for, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and faithful servant,

JOB ORTON.

November 5, 1773. You say, you heard Mr. *** speak rather contemptuously of the fifth of November, calling it a state day. But as it commemorates our deliverance from popery and slavery, it is a day much to be remembered by all true protestants, in all generations; and I am sorry so little regard is paid to it.

LETTER XIII.

December 28, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—It gives me pleasure to find that Dr. Stonhouse's Prayers,† and his little tract on the sacrament,‡ meet with such encouragement, and I hope they will do much good. I wish by your public and private addresses, you may be able to lead your

monument to his memory, in the cathedral at Bristol, and prevailed with Miss Hannah More to write the following epitaph.

When worthless grandeur fills th' embellish'd urn,
No poignant grief attends the sable bier;
But when distinguished excellence we mourn,
Deep is the sorrow, genuine the tear.

Stranger! shouldest thou approach this awful shrine,
The merit of the honoured dead to seek,
The friend, the son, the Christian, the divine,
Let those who knew him, those who loved him, speak.

Oh! let them in some pause of anguish say
What zeal inspired, what faith enlarged his breast;
How soon th' unfettered spirit winged its way
From earth to heaven, from blessing to be blest.

* "I am sorry to say it, the more a man doth his duty, and the greater pattern he is of study and application, the more he reproaches the idleness and inattention of his brethren, and consequently the more enemies he creates."—Bp. CLAYTON'S Letter to a Young Clergyman.

† Prayers for the use of private persons, families, children, and servants. This book is in the Society's Catalogue for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

‡ A Short Explanation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

parishioners and neighbours to the daily serious use of the prayers. And as the Dr. hath sent some of them for you to distribute to every house in his parish, it will afford you a favourable opportunity when you give them the books, of talking seriously and closely to them on the subject; and, in your future visits, of renewing the discourse, by inquiring what use they have made of them. But there is danger of their resting in the mere form, the opus operatum, just in reading the prayers, without due seriousness and solemnity, and taking pains to impress the sentiments, and excite the desires they contain in the heart. I fear, we all fail in this respect, and whether we pray with, or without a book, we do not feel the good sentiments we utter, nor warmly desire the blessings we ask."* At least I find it so with myself, and fear it is so with others, else I think their prayers would have a visibly better effect on their tempers and lives, as all sincere prayers are certainly adapted to have, as well as to engage divine assistance. I hope you will find the good effect of your addresses to your people on this subject. It affords me great pleasure to hear of the interest you have in their esteem and affection. No good can be done by a minister, till that point is in some measure gained, and then he may hope to draw them with the cords of love, Hos. xi. 4. It is not to be expected, in the nature of things, that men should become quite good all at once. Various methods must be tried, and long patience exercised; especially with those who are grossly ignorant, or have indulged themselves in long habits of sin, negligence, or formality. You see how your farmers manage the ground, which they till; what various methods they take, suited to the different soils; what repeated trials, how long they wait. This will both instruct and encourage you in your spiritual husbandry. And you need not be informed, who gives both the common and spiritual farmer the increase. But after all, there is very little hope of doing any good upon old sinners, especially formalists.† You will therefore bend your principal attention to the rising generation, where you will find the heart more impressible. Be prudently familiar with them. Give them a short hint whenever you see them in an easy, pleasant path, without the formality of a solemn address. I know by experience that such hints will often abide and do good, while a direct, long, though serious address, will not be regarded. You will be more likely to be useful to them as being young yourself. For young people are ready to suppose that aged ministers warn and caution them against many indulgencies and follies, because they are grown past a capacity of relishing them themselves. This makes it very de-

* Consider well each petition as you offer it up; and if you have not been sufficiently attentive to it, repeat it again and again, till your heart accompanies the words. See Dr. STONHOUSE's Every Man's Assistant.

† Jer. xiii. 23.

sirable that young divines should take particular pains with youth. It will require some care and prudence to keep up the dignity of your station and character amidst such methods of addressing to youth. But it requires less in your situation, than if you had young gentlemen and ladies to deal with. You will never forget the exhortation, "Feed my lambs." John xxi. 15.

I am obliged to you for your extract from the preface to Orr's sermons.* It shows an excellent spirit, and very much suits my own case. Whether I have been the instrument of much good I know not. I have not seen those good effects of my ministry, which some ministers have had, at least in the conversion of sinners. There were few, if any of my congregation, who were profligate and abandoned; and whose conversion, when that happens, is very remarkable, and engages much attention. I hope many aged persons have been edified by my services, and not a few young people trained up in sentiments of wisdom and piety; who are now useful in their families and stations, and ornaments to religion. Indeed I lay very little stress upon what some divines call conversions;† I have seen so many instances of their coming to nothing; or that their converts have only been converted from the sins of men to the sins of devils, from drunkenness and debauchery to spiritual pride, bitterness, and uncharitableness; and this I cannot call a saving change. I see little alteration for the better in the conduct of many who have been said to be converted. I am cautious of calling any thing by that name, where there is not a regular, consistent conduct following it. Hasty impressions, which some ministers are very ready to observe and admire, are often lost in a little time, and those who have been under them become worse than they were before. I have no idea of conversion, as passing a certain line, and then getting into a saving state. Conversion is a work of time, and I see no right we have to say any are converted or become good, till one hath a longer season of trial, to observe whether they continue stedfast in the practice of righteousness, and act in every circumstance and relation, in the

* The passage referred to above is as follows.—"As the author hath now got into a period of life and state of health which will not permit of his being much more useful, nor probably of his continuing much longer in the present scene, he thanketh God, that under increasing infirmities of body, and an apprehension of his approaching dissolution, he possesseth his soul in patience and serenity, and hath the most sincere consolation and joy, from a reflection on his having laboured, for by far the greater part of his life, with at least an honest zeal and assiduity, in the service of religion. He cannot, indeed, flatter himself with the thought of having been actually the author of much good, by all his pains and diligence; but of a hearty good will to the best of causes, and of well-meant endeavours to have served and promoted it, he is fully conscious. And upon this foundation, notwithstanding his defects and failings, of which he is very sensible, and which are the matter of his unfeigned humiliation and mourning, he presumeth to look up, with an humble hope, to the supreme judge of his conduct, and arbiter of his fate; waiting for his mercy, through Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. Amen."—Preface to the Sermons of the late Rev. John Orr, D.D. Archdeacon of Ferns.

† "The thirteenth letter," says Dr. Kippis, "contains some admirable remarks on religious conversions."—ACCOUNT.

main, consistent with the demands of the gospel. I wish you may have the pleasure to see many such converts.

I thank you likewise for your hint about Mr. Thomas, in the account given of him by Calamy. I have read it often, and transcribed some passages from it into the blank leaf of the bible, which always lies upon my desk, particularly the following. "Si non concedatur ut præco sim publicus, sim tamen operarius; quod publice non possum, faciam [ut licet, valet] privatim. Quod non possum prædicando, prestem scribendo. Auxiliare Domine, servum senilem." Mr. Thomas was an excellent man, yet Mr. Nelson in his life of Bishop Bull, who spent some time in Thomas's family, insinuates that the bishop had no advantage there. Such was that good man's bigotry.

If you have not got the Abridgment of Baxter's Saints' Rest, by Mr. Fawcett of this town, pray get it; as I think it a very good practical book, and may be useful to lend to your parishioners. I revised the manuscript, compared it with the original, added, altered, and left out, and have the vanity to think I improved it; though I wish now I had made more alterations in the phraseology. Baxter (notwithstanding what you may have heard to the contrary) was so far from being a republican, that he refused the engagement; opposed Cromwell's measures and his party, and told him to his face, that "they (meaning the soberer presbyterians) esteemed their kingly government a blessing, and knew not what they had done to forfeit it." To which Cromwell answered, "God hath changed it as he pleased."

I know how to pity you in your dull situation; as mine is altogether, or nearly, as dull as your own, especially this winter season. I am mostly confined to the house, have very little company, and on some bad days hardly see the human face divine. But I can take pleasure in my good books. I converse mostly with the dead, and that is the fittest converse for one who is in a manner buried alive, and is literally near the grave. I wish to gain spiritual good by this converse, and to grow more "meet for the inheritance among the saints in light." I should vastly prefer Cheverel to the bustle, hurries, luxury, and dissipation of Bristol, where you have lately been. An aged minister, who used to go from his country obscurity once a year to visit some relations in London, would never stay above two or three days with them; and when solicited to prolong his visit, used to say, "No, I will go to my country retirement; for you are all mad—mad upon the world and pleasure."

I am much obliged by your devout remembrance of me, and beg the continuance of it. My spirits are so weak and broken, that my best duties are extremely languid and defective. I rejoice in the merciful advocate, whom the Father heareth always. I am, your affectionate friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XIV.

April 24, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—I have long been so very weak and low, that I have had neither strength nor spirits to write any thing but what was absolutely necessary. I bless God I am at present a little recruited. My spirits have been better, but my strength is still very small, and I am fearful of applying to any business, or even sitting down to write, lest it should throw me back again into weakness and nervous complaints. However I must venture to send you a few lines; the confusion and interruption with which they are written may not make them less acceptable to you. My spirits have been greatly depressed, and a constant painful sensation in every nerve and fibre hath wasted my flesh and filled my mind with sensations exquisitely more painful than those of the body. I thank God, I have this last week been more comfortable, have got some refreshing sleep, and am more easy and cheerful; though I still find myself very weak and unfit for any active service, much less for any thing like study. I desire to be some way or other serving and glorifying God; but how this can be done in such circumstances as mine, at least by me, it is not easy to say. But Providence hath wise and gracious ends to answer by our afflictions, even those which incapacitate us for those services to which we are strongly inclined, and for which we have some proper qualifications. We are often, and indeed, almost always, at a loss, when we set ourselves to judge of the reasons of the divine conduct. Our duty is submission;* but that is not easy to be practised, nor can it be maintained as it ought to be, without a "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," which I wish may be more abundantly shed abroad into our hearts. You need it very much in your ministerial capacity; and considering that station in which Providence hath fixed you, to quicken you to the duties of it, and to reconcile you to its inconveniences and disagreeable circumstances; which I should think would be easily borne by a good man, who hath health and spirits, and forms a just estimate of the worth of souls, the great business of life, and the duties of the ministerial office.

I have just been reading a volume of sermons written by a Dr. Hopkins, formerly a prebendary of Worcester, published by the celebrated Dr. Hickes. In some accounts of his life prefixed to it,

* I wish to be content as a patient, waiting servant. St. Paul styles himself a servant, a minister, and an apostle of Christ, while in prison. I have lately been comforted with this passage from an old writer. "One act of silent submission, and a quiet application to those duties which are immediately necessary, though neither easy nor honourable, is of much more value than a long train of activity and zeal in a public and visible sphere of action, sweetened by reputation and applause." Nov. 29, 1781.

he observes, "That he went every Saturday fourteen long dirty miles from Worcester to a small country parish, believing that Christ paid the same price for the poor as the rich, the cottager and the courtier, and that a faithful pastor, who truly endeavoured to save the soul of the meanest ploughman, would have as great a reward from his Master, as he that laboured to convert the greatest emperor in the world." He would say, "That a priest was not to value his parish for the revenue or the quality of the people in it, but purely as a cure of souls, as a vineyard in which he was God's husbandman; that as large and as acceptable a return of his labours might be made from a country cure, as from a parish in a royal city, and that a good sermon, by God's blessing, would be the power of God to salvation in a church, where there was not a sword or a diamond to be seen, as where coaches crowded about the church door."

I wish Dr. Stonhouse's insertions in the newspapers, from my letters, may be of service to their readers. We do not know what good we do. A young physician of considerable reputation and fortune (Dr. Bostock) died lately at Liverpool of a violent fever. A little before his death he told the minister who attended him, and who is a friend of mine, that he had received great and lasting benefits in his religious interests, by reading some letters of mine, to my nephew, when they were fellow-pupils together at the academy. I had no idea that he, or any one else, had seen such letters. But I am thankful he did, since they were attended with a happy effect.*

I am truly concerned that you have under your pastoral care any flagrantly disobedient to the laws of Christ. But what minister hath not such under his care? There was a traitor in Christ's family. Young ministers are apt to set out with expectations raised too high, and expect more encouragement and success than they are ever likely to find." "Old Adam will be too hard for young Melancthon," as that venerable reformer complained, after he had been some time a preacher, and had great expectation from his zealous ministry.

I hope you will have some very comfortable and improving weeks with the doctor and his family, during his residence at Cheverel; which you must set against many uncomfortable and dreary ones in the winter. I wish the doctor would ride on horse-back every dry day, as I do. *Recipe caballum,* is his best prescription.† Surely he might meet with some gentle, easy horse, no matter how ill-shaped and ugly, that might carry him safely about the fields of Cheverel. I remember an aged gouty minister, who could not walk; and having a large garden, he used to ride often round it in a day upon an old steady horse, who used

* The editor of these letters has reason to believe that the publication of them has been useful; for which he would be thankful to a kind Providence.

† See the life of the Right Reverend Father in God, Seth, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, written by Dr. Walter Pope, 1697, pages 65, 66, and 178.

to count his rounds for him; and then, when he had completed them, would stop and proceed no further, though the rider tried every persuasive and pungent argument to excite him. I heartily wish and pray for his health and continued usefulness. Mr. B. is settled at Cam, within a mile of Dursley, in Gloucestershire; which is, I imagine, about thirty miles from you. You might contrive to meet at some place equidistant; and he says he shall be very glad to see you.

Continue your good wishes and prayers for me. I want more clearness and satisfaction as to the great concern. My prayers are so broken, and attended with so much distraction and impertinence, that they are uncomfortable to myself, and can hardly be acceptable even with all the gracious allowance of the gospel. But I do not love to trouble my friends with my complaints, any further than to desire and direct their petitions.

Yours affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. Pray prevent your friend Mr. * * from buying me any of the castor-oil he spoke of, as I have met with some in this town, and have laid in a good stock of it. This is something like Hobbes, with his new frieze coat at ninety-six. "This," said he, "will last me three years; then I will have just such another." But I am no Hobbist.

LETTER XV.

July 22, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—I am very glad to hear that you are getting upon a plan of economy.* You will find great comfort and benefit by attending to it diligently and daily, and making the errors of one day and week a check upon the expenses of the next. A man must deny himself many agreeable circumstances and indulgences, if he would keep within the compass of a moderate income, especially if he would save something, as all young men, particularly single men, ought to do. I think no man living ought to spend the whole of his income, but make some provision yearly for contingent and necessary expenses. In this view, I have found it absolutely necessary to avoid taking some journies, buying some books,† or particularly expensive clothes, which otherwise I should have liked. An error on the saving side is by far the best, as being most for a man's (especially a

* In the fifteenth letter are some excellent observations on economy.—Dr. KIPPIS.

† Be cautious not to purchase books which you do not want. Buy those chiefly which will be of great and standing use to you, as a divine, through life; as some good critics, commentators, and practical writers. But I am afraid of your over-doing, even in buying useful books."—Mr. ORTON TO THE EDITOR.

clergyman's) reputation, interest, and usefulness. Besides, minds formed to a benevolent turn, and which are ready to pity, assist, and relieve the distressed, will be often, without the utmost frugality, brought into a very disagreeable situation; either to withhold their charity, and thereby hurt their judgment and inclination, or to leave some debts unpaid beyond the proper time, or to solicit their income before it is due; either of which will be very injurious to their credit and character, and the acceptance and success of their ministry. Considering your natural disposition, you ought to read Watkinson on Economy,* at least once a quarter, till you have not only imbibed his maxims, but brought yourself to a habit of acting upon them, and never for a single instance, or in the value of a penny, swerving from them. There will be another great advantage in your case attending this. It will habituate you to foresight, a care to remember, and consider, and calculate times and expenses, especially before you go from home. It will dispose and habituate you to get your sermons ready in time; and, in short, have a most happy influence on your health, fortune, and reputation. That remark hath been sealed by the ruin of thousands for both worlds, "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little," Eccles. xix. 1. I hope you will excuse the freedom with which I write to you upon this subject, as your comfort and usefulness lie near my heart.

I shall, I believe, read no more of the controversy† your letter speaks of; as I am tired with such idle and endless debates.‡ Mr. Baxter said in his old age, "I have done with these debates and speculations. The creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments content me, and are my daily meat and drink, and have been so to many other aged divines and Christians." But these controversies are no new things; they are as old as Christianity, and were foretold in it; and therefore should be no stumbling-block to any. The things so much disputed about are not and cannot be fundamentals. Let ministers dwell upon the plain things of the gospel; and preach indisputable doctrines practically, and moral duties evangelically. I shall be glad to see Dr. Stonehouse's Hints to a Curate;§ and wish they may do much good.

* Watkinson on Economy, with Archbishop Hort's Instructions to the Clergy, and Dr. Stonhouse's Hints to a Curate, bound together, make an admirable vade-mecum for a young clergyman.

† Between the late Mr. Fleteher, vicar of Madeley, Shropshire, and his opponents.

‡ "I know no better book than Dr. Williams's Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated, to enable you to judge of these controversies. He is the clearest, fairest controversial writer I am aequainted with."—Mr. Orton.

§ This useful treatise was first published in 1774, when the editor of these letters was the doctor's curate. An eminent dignitary (Dr. Tueker, dean of Gloueester) speaks of it in the following manner. "It is as seasonable and useful a thing as any the doctor ever published. And though mueh of his plan may be impraetieable in large parishes, yet many of the hints may be well adopted in all plaees; and the clergy in general

I bless God, I have been in better spirits for the last fortnight, and been able pretty nearly to balance acccounts with my correspondents, and to do a little in revising some sermons, which I mean to publish. But I cannot do much at a time. Many hours, and some whole days, I am quite laid aside as useless, and often in great pain and weakness. But having obtained help of God, I continue to this day; and, blessed be his name, have some intervals of ease and cheerfulness, which I hope are employed to some valuable purposes. But notwithstanding all this favourable discipline, and this mixture of mercies and afflictions, which I have experienced for so many years, I find very little improvement in the divine life. I feel much languor and deadness at those seasons and in those circumstances when I ought to be most serious, lively, and attentive, and cannot raise my grovelling heart to that spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, which is so desirable to one who is on the borders of the grave. My thoughts cling too much to earth, empty as it is, and to this body, from which I have suffered, and am daily suffering, so much pain and uneasiness. I entertain myself in reading my good old books, in which there is a savour and a suitableness to my case, which I find in few modern ones. I have been reading for a fifth or sixth time Dr. Lucas's Inquiry after Happiness, and his other pieces, which always afford me new pleasure.* I pray God to assist and prosper you in all your undertakings for his glory and the edification of the church, and beg the continuance of your prayers for me, that I may be doing some little good while I am continued here, and be growing more and more meet for a nobler sphere of service, when my Master calls me hence. I am always glad to hear from you, and am,

Your affectionate and faithful friend,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XVI.

January 14, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—AT this season of the year it is usual for all wise and prudent people to settle their accounts, to pay their debts, and to leave none outstanding. But it is the unhappy case of some, who bear an honest mind, and are willing to be out of debt, not to be able to be so. This is at present,

have all something to learn from it." One of our present bishops gives these Hints to those whom he ordains.

* Lucas's character as a writer, as given by Dr Doddridge. "His style very peculiar; sometimes exceeding free, nearly approaching conversation; sometimes grand and sublime; generally very expressive. His method not clear, but thoughts excellent; many taken from attentive observation of life; wrote as entirely devoted to God, and superior to the world. His Practical Christianity most valuable; and Inquiry after Happiness, especially the second volume of it."—MANUSCRIPT.

and is often, my own case with regard to my epistolary correspondents. Not for want of an honest mind, or a real affection to my friends, but through inability. I have long been a bankrupt in my health, and strength, and spirits, and must throw myself upon the compassion and kindness of my friends to bear with me and excuse me, and I hope they are and will be willing to accept of a composition, and to take a part of what I owe to their friendship in lieu of the whole. I have no reason to suppose that you in particular will be an unmerciful creditor, and therefore must beg your acceptance of a small composition for two or three very friendly letters, for which I am indebted to you. It is so painful and injurious to me in general to write, and there are so few intervals in which I can muster up a little strength and a few spirits to write to my friends that I need great candour and indulgence from them. Nor is it so easy on other accounts to me to write as it was formerly: in all respects, non sum qualis eram. But I hope all my friends are endeavouring to resemble our common Father and friend, who accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not? who considers our frame, and makes gracious allowances for our infirmities.

I am sorry for the trouble and vexation you have had, and are likely to have, with your eccentric singers. They are in general conceited, troublesome fellows, and have no more religion than an organ or a fiddle. And I wish the doctor, when he comes to you, may be able to bring them to order. But steadiness, and not yielding to them, is the only way to humble them.

Tu ne cede malis; sed contra audentior ito.

I would propose, in the mean time, that you talk calmly and seriously to them separately, and endeavour to give them better notions than they have of the nature and design of psalmody; and particularly urge upon their consciences a reverence for the presence of God; and how affronting it must be to him to have the church turned into a theatre, and divine worship into a farce. I know nothing more likely to shame and reform them.*

I am glad you saw Lady Whitmore at Bath. A short interview with her now and then, when you can enjoy it, in passing, without appearing to force yourself upon her notice, may be

* All persons, says Archbishop Secker, in his second charge to his clergy, who are by nature qualified, ought to learn, and constantly join to glorify him that made them, in psalms and spiritual songs. This was the practice of the early Christians: it was restored very justly at the reformation: and hath declined of late, within most of our memories, very unhappily. For the improvements made by a few in church music, were they real improvements, will seldom equal the harmony of a general chorus; in which any lesser dissonances are quite lost; and it is something inexpressibly elevating to hear the "voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters and of mighty thunders," to speak in the words of scripture, "making a joyful noise to the God of their salvation, and singing his praises with understanding."

serviceable to you. But you have lived long enough in the world already, not to depend upon the promises of great people. "Surely men of high degree are a lie,"* is as true now as it was in David's time, and the inference he drew is equally wise and salutary, not to trust in them, but to make the most high God our friend and refuge, who will never forsake us. I can see no impropriety in your making her a present of my Discourses to the Aged.† I know not whether the author's being a dissenter would prejudice her against them. But this I know assuredly, that Sir Thomas Whitmore often treated the author with great civility and respect when he was in his company, especially about thirty years ago, at the time our county-infirmary was just established.‡

The death of Miss W. of this town, was a very sudden and awful event. It was occasioned by a mortification in her bowels, brought on, it is supposed, by eating too many raisins on the preceding day. The family were greatly affected, but bore the calamity well. It fell peculiarly heavy on a young gentleman in London, of a most amiable temper and character, to whom she would have been married in a few months. He came down to the funeral, and showed much of the spirit of a Christian, with all the feelings of a man, and the tenderness of a lover. I wrote to Dr. Stonhouse an account of the circumstances of the case, addressed to his daughter, which I find he inserted in the Bristol newspaper; which if it doth good it is well.§

I can read very little these short dark days, but I sometimes entertain myself with some of my good old authors. Fuller's Holy State hath afforded me much pleasure: in which there are many trifling things, but some lively remarks; it abounds with historical anecdotes, some of which deserve remembrance, and may pertinently be introduced into sermons, and be very enter-

* Psalm lxii. 9.

† See vol. i. p. 323. "The subjects of which are admirably adapted to the situation of the persons for whom they were intended; and concerning which it was justly observed, that they breathe an excellent spirit, and show an earnest desire in the writer to advance the interests of genuine piety and practical religion." Kippis's Account of Mr. Orton.

‡ Mr. Orton had acted voluntarily as secretary to the infirmary; drawn up some of its first reports; had preached on its behalf at his place of worship; at the same time subscribing himself, and procuring the subscriptions of others; and as party disputes ran high at the time of its establishment, he had the happy art of so conciliating matters, that the charity received no essential injury.

§ "So speedily was this lovely flower cut down, in all the bloom of health and cheerfulness, and with the most agreeable prospects before her! So soon may other young ladies vanish from their parents and friends, and enter upon an awful eternity; so soon may all their schemes and views for this world be blasted at once! Those who are unaffected with such an instructive event as this, or can be soon forgetful of it, do great injury to their own judgment, and to the good education they have had. 'Tis to be hoped this striking and sudden removal of so young a person into the other world will be the means of causing survivors to ponder on it, and to receive instruction from it; and especially to think now and then on that important text, so awfully illustrated by this and the like frequent events (Prov. xxvii. 1); "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

taining and useful. He deals much in puns and jingle, but was a man of vast reading. He published several folios, as the Holy State, his Church History (a large valuable folio), and another entitled, the Worthies of England, or the History of eminent Men, in the several counties where they were born. I read not long ago Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations. If you have them not, I would recommend them to your perusal. The style is awkward; but they are full of excellent matter, and would furnish out materials for many useful sermons. I have read them more than once or twice before, but never observed their usefulness so much in this view as lately. Besides this, there is a variety of most excellent hints of advice, concerning a man's behaviour in every part of his social character; though they are only given as his thoughts, purposes, and resolutions, with regard to his own personal conduct. He is a striking instance of the truth of that observation, which cannot be too often inculcated, or too carefully attended to, "that if a man allows himself to be imprudent, giddy, and inattentive in any one instance, though it be in itself small and inconsiderable, it will have an unhappy influence upon his whole conduct; no fixed principle keeps him from being so in all other instances, and had he equal temptations, he would violate all the duties of prudence, and, by degrees, those of morality and religion too." It is therefore peculiarly necessary, and of the utmost importance, that persons in their early years, and first setting out in life, keep a resolute watch over themselves, even in the smallest instances, in which their natural temper leads them to be imprudent and indiscreet, and not neglect this important question, before they undertake even any little affair, "Is it right and fit, prudent and proper?" I have read somewhere of a saying of the famous Brutus, that he looked upon that person as having been ill educated, or as having spent his youth very badly, who had not learned to say "No" boldly.

I am thankful that I was led, in early life, to read so much practical divinity, and the lives and histories of good men, as I can remember what I then read better than what I read yesterday, which is the case with most old people, especially if they have bodily diseases added to the natural decays of age. I have fewer and shorter intervals of what may be called ease than usual, and must expect them to grow shorter. I am a wonder to myself, that I have lived to see the beginning of another year. I cannot expect to see the end of it. May I employ the poor remains of life as well as possible! I wish my infirmities may suggest hints of caution to my younger brethren and friends, to apply diligently to their Master's work, to be frugal of their time, and frugal of their money, as age and prior infirmities may render them incapable of doing good, or filling up stations in which they might be comfortably supported.

And the state of the world at present is such, that nothing can be more disagreeable and painful than to be in circumstances of necessity and dependence, when every comfortable circumstance and accommodation is so desirable to lighten the burdens of life. Loss of time, and neglect of opportunities of usefulness, often oppress my spirits. Spending too much time about trifling books and studies, the contents and subjects of which I could wish entirely to have blotted from my memory, is a very painful circumstance. I mention what gives me uneasiness, that you may now avoid the like, and employ your health and money, your time and abilities, so as to leave no room for painful reflections hereafter. May God prolong your life as much as his glory, and your own usefulness and comfort may render desirable, and may the close of it have no bitter remorse, no uneasy sensations attending it! Continue your prayers for me, and believe me to be,

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

JOB ORTON.

P.S. Besides Lucas's Inquiry after Happiness, (as mentioned in a former letter), he published two volumes of sermons, which I much admire, and likewise a small tract, concerning the duty of servants, with advices and prayers for their use: but his principal work was a small treatise, called Practical Christianity, or the chief design of the gospel, which hath gone through many editions, and contains the substance of forty or fifty excellent sermons, and is one of the best books I know for a young minister, or, indeed, any person, to read a chapter of it daily.*

LETTER XVII.

July 28, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—I am willing to write to you once more before you leave Cheverel to go to your new living,† though I have nothing very particular to say to you. I was glad to see your mother, as it gave me an opportunity of conversing with her about your settlement at Wormington; and she talked like a

* I herewith (says Sir Richard Steele) send you Dr. Lucas's Practical Christianity for your serious perusal. If you have already read it, I desire you would give it to one of your friends who has not. I think you cannot recommend it better than by inserting, by way of specimen, these passages which I point out to you. Since I have a soul capable of happiness and misery, it naturally follows, that it were unreasonable to lose this soul for the gain of the whole world. For the soul is I myself; but if that be miserable I must needs be so. Outward circumstances of fortune may give the world occasion to think me happy, but they can never make me so. Shall I call myself happy if discontent and sorrow eat out the life and spirit of my soul? If lusts and passions riot and mutiny in my bosom? If my sins scatter an uneasy shame all over me, and my guilt appals and frightens me? What avails it that my rooms are stately, &c.? See the Guardian, vol. i. No. 63, for the remainder of this striking quotation.

† Wormington, in Gloucestershire.

wise and good woman, and a tender parent. I really think it would be best for you not to keep house there, at least at present. Cannot you contrive to board with some reputable farmer in the parish, in whose house you might have a room, and be accommodated with all necessaries at a cheap rate? Thus you would live in a family way, and not find the ensuing winter so dull as it will be if you are in your parsonage-house, and thus you will save money to furnish your house, when you see occasion for so doing. I have often heard Dr. Doddridge and several other divines say, that they lived very comfortably in farm-houses at their first setting out, and I should think it on many accounts desirable for you. But of this you must judge for yourself.

I waited with impatience to hear from Dr. Stonhouse, to learn the state of his own and his family's health. The letter I have received from him, like all other earthly intelligences and concerns, is counterchanged, and gives reason for a mixture of joy and grief. But he and I have lived so long to little purpose, if we have not learned to expect these mixed scenes, and not to be greatly moved by them; and especially to improve them to quicken our diligence and improve our piety. He is gone with his family to spend some time at Chester House, in Northamptonshire, which is a charming place for meditation, reading, and devotion; and there is no doubt but that he and Mrs. Stonhouse will improve it accordingly. I heartily wish he may be free, while there, from all disagreeable and impertinent company, and that his health may be greatly recruited by his recess. The doctor wishes to leave Bristol entirely, and I trust Providence will direct him to some comfortable and useful settlement. I have desired him to remember the words of the poet:—

> Yet reason, while it forms the subtle plan,
> Some purer source of pleasure to explore,
> Must deem it vain for that poor pilgrim, man,
> To think of resting till his journey's o'er.

I am glad I have no visitors like Mr. * * *, no such Bath friends. I would not have them. They are not friends. While I am independent, I would submit to such grievances and inconveniences, nor should my wife (if I had such a one as his). "What must we do?"—they will say. Why break off all correspondence with such. Tell them (as I did at Shrewsbury, and do here) "I am old and infirm; I will have my own hours. At them I shall be glad to see my friends; but they must come soon, and go soon,* or not at all." But we cannot do this

* "It has occurred to us," says Dr. Kippis, "that Mr. Orton, who so long resided at Kidderminster, the principal seat of Mr. Baxter's ministerial usefulness, had a considerable resemblance, in certain respects, to that famous divine. In extent of abilities, Baxter was undoubtedly greatly superior to Mr. Orton, and he prodigiously exceeded

at * *." Then I would remove to the Land's End, or to a Welsh-mountain, and would not sacrifice such blessings as health, regularity, domestic comfort, and family religion, for any person or persons whatsoever. I am independent, and will be so. A few nights ago I heard some weaver's lad singing a song under my window, of which I remember no more than this—"Let them say what they will—by Jove I'll be free." I have little company and acquaintance. Ease and quiet, and an interview now and then with a worthy friend, bound my ambition. But I have a numerous and excellent society of prophets, apostles, and practical writers, especially Baxter, Bates, and Scudder, with whom I have lately been conversing.

I am truly sorry for your complaints of yourself, and the state of your own mind; but hope they are not altogether just. The neglect or formal performance of secret duties is but a bad symptom. But I am glad you have a conviction of this. Cherish it, my dear sir, I beseech you; and immediately and resolutely set to work, and labour to obtain more of the devotional, that is, the true spirit of the gospel. If you have (as I hope you falsely suggest) all to begin again, let it be done without delay, with a humble dependence upon, and diligent seeking after, divine grace. Endeavour to improve short intervals in conversing with God and your own heart; repeat some devotional psalms and hymns when you are lying down in bed, when you awake, and are rising and dressing. I think I have found some advantage by this. Bishop Ken's are worth committing to memory. Apply diligently to your studies, and the religious care of the souls of your parish, talking seriously and closely to them; remembering that it is true in spirituals, "the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."*

Your friends here are well. I shall be glad to receive a letter from you. There is no dean or bishop loves you, and wishes you so well, and would be glad to serve you in his way, more than Yours very affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

him in the multiplicity of his writings; but with regard to the nature of their practical works, and the strictness (we had almost said the rigidness) of their personal piety, there was no small degree of similarity. Both of them display in their productions the same ardent zeal to excite the attention of men to their eternal concerns, and urge these concerns with peculiar energy and pathos. Both of them were animated with a seriousness of spirit which seems never to have forsaken them in the most ordinary occurrences of life; nor could either of them bear to be much interrupted in their sacred employments. When some visitors to Mr. Baxter, after having sat awhile with him, said, "We are afraid, sir, that we break in upon your time;" his answer was, "To be sure you do." What was Mr. Orton's disposition in this respect is expressed with great vivacity in one of his letters to a young clergyman, Letter xvii.—ACCOUNT BY KIPPIS.

* I recommended lately to a friend, Ostervald's treatise against the Sin of Impurity; which contains the strongest motives for a life of purity, and the best directions how to attain it, that are any where to be found. This most valuable book is frequently to be bought from catalogues at a very low price.—MR. ORTON.

LETTER XVIII.

September 23, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I received your letter from Gloucester; and am much affected by what you say in it of Bishop Warburton's state of superannuation.* He was a man of great learning and abilities; and I have several excellent letters of his by me, which were written many years ago to Dr. Doddridge.†

It gives me pleasure to find you are so comfortable in your new situation, and I heartily wish you success in it. I am afraid you find your parish like the field of the slothful, and that you have much difficult work to root out, as well as to plant. But set about it vigorously and resolutely, and in divine strength, with earnest prayer for assistance and success, and God will prosper you. The plan of your introductory discourse, differs nothing from mine, on the same text, 1 Cor. ii. 2 (which was the first sermon I ever preached, and was delivered at Welford, in Northamptonshire, April 15, 1739), only I enter more into the several parts of the text than you have done, and have a more particular application; else in other respects yours is unexceptionable, proper, and useful. Methinks I would fain have you do something on each part of the Lord's day by way of exhortation. If you preach in the morning, expound in the afternoon one of the lessons, or the epistle and gospel for the day, in a short manner, with some practical reflections upon it. You will meet with sufficient help from your commentators, particularly from Henry's Expositions,‡ and Doddridge's Family Expositor. This will be easier to you than making a sermon, perhaps equally useful to your people; and it will be a likely

* Not that his memory and faculties, though much impaired, were ever wholly disabled:" says the present Bishop of Worcester, in his very interesting and finely written account of the life, writings, and character of Bishop Warburton.

† Since published in a collection of Letters to and from Dr. Doddridge, of Northampton; by the editor of these Letters, 1790.

‡ Mr. Orton was a great admirer of the two Mr. Henrys, father and son, and much resembled them in their plain and practical manner of preaching. "I have been hearing Henry the third," said a good man once to his neighbour, after having attended a lecture, preached by Mr. Orton, at Broad Oak, in Flintshire, the place where Mr. Philip Henry had formerly lived. He read Mr. Matthew Henry's Expositions in his family, and had a most happy faculty, whilst he was doing it, of abridging that truly useful, though too diffusive writer.

In Dr. Kippis's Account of Mr. Orton, in the Biogr. Britan., he remarks, that "Mr. O. had been solicited, during his retirement, to form a regular abridgment of Henry's Expositions; but his increasing infirmities obliged him to decline the employment." Mr. Orton to a friend writes thus:—"I hardly know what you mean by my abridgment of Henry: I never undertook, or thought of such a thing: if I had, my days would have been abridged and finished long ago. It is too arduous a work for my strength and capacity. I wish it were done by a good hand; but as the copy is the bookseller's property, there will be great difficulties in the way.—I suppose you may have heard me express my wish that it were abridged, and from thence concluded that I had done it."

means to engage them to attend more regularly, when they have something more than the common service. Bishop Burnet strongly recommends long texts and short sermons, or, in our style, expositions; and this method of expounding some part of the scripture read in the service hath been practised by many of the clergy in former days, who were most eminent for piety and zeal.* I have just been reading again Bishop Bedel's Life, who was eminently pious and good, as well as a very learned man. It is said of him, that every Sunday he expounded the epistle and gospel for the day. If you have never read that life, I would recommend it to you; from which you will do well to make some extracts into your common-place book. In the latter part of the book is the best confutation of the tenets of popery which I ever saw in so small a compass.

I am glad you have introduced psalm-singing into your church at Wormington. I think your best way of carrying it on in an agreeable manner, will be to get some of your young men in your own house now and then, and to go over some plain tunes with them, till they can sing them perfectly; and thus by degrees the rest of the congregation will learn them. Let not these young men sit together, but be dispersed properly over the church. I used to take this method with my young people at Shrewsbury; but I never attempted to teach them the grounds of music, because I thought it unnecessary, and indeed because I was not capable of it. But they learned to sing such tunes, and in such time and method, that that part of the service was honourably conducted. By degrees you and they may learn some more, though I should think about eight common metre, six long metre, and two short metre tunes, would be enough. Probably some neighbouring parish clerk would come once a week to teach them for a small sum; but I think you can teach them sufficiently yourself. It will be advisable for you to go to the school, and see how the children learn, and speak to and encourage them; and to direct the mistress privately how to discharge her duty, and excite her to it. The presence of the minister of the parish, now and then, will quicken both teacher and learners, and have a good effect. You will in the pulpit, and especially in private, excite the parents to be solicitous that their children may learn their books and catechism.

Dr. Evans's Sermons on the Christian Temper are, I think, on the whole, some of the best discourses I ever read for judgment, style, fulness of matter, regularity of thought and division, and coming home to men's consciences. I have lately bought a neat Scotch edition of them in duodecimo.

* See page 416 of these letters. "It may be proper at other times to explain, in the way of sermons, the Book of Common Prayer, so far as it relates to the constant service of the church; for it is necessary that people should understand the devout use and true meaning of it, as that a soldier should understand the dexterous use of his weapons." Dr. Stonhouse's Hints to a Curate.

I have now good reason to believe that my little tract on Christian Worship* hath sold pretty well. You will, I know, join with me in thankfulness on this account, and in prayer, that it may be further useful. The manner in which the Dean of Gloucester speaks of this undertaking gives me no small pleasure, and I hope his recommendation will introduce it into the hands of many who might otherwise never see it.

I have read Mr. John Wesley's Address to the Americans, and am much pleased with it. But I am tired with politics, and desire to be found among the quiet in the land.† A worthy minister in London writes to me in the following manner.—"I wish I and my family were settled, at least for some time, with you, or in some obscure corner of the land, where I should hear nothing of what is passing in the world. For my part, I think both sides are mad, and trying which shall go the most desperate lengths. The question between Great Britain and the colonies I never entered into. I have much more important concerns to take up my time and attention than to engage in an affair to which I am very unequal. What the end of these things may be, God only knows; but it is high time to prepare for the worst."—This good man speaks my sentiments fully. These things are little to me, who am going out of the world. I am sorry for you that are young, and for posterity. But the Lord reigneth: to his favour and blessing I commend you in all your interests and attempts to do good; and am,

Your affectionate and faithful humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

* See vol. i. p. 457. The subjects treated of in this piece, which has been translated into Welsh, are, the profitable hearing of the word; the joining in public prayer; and the singing of the praises of God.—ACCOUNT.

† "I am sick of politics, and mourn for our national state.—The colonies are mad; and we are not much less so. There are many concealed rebels and mock patriots among us, disseminating their rebellious and republican principles. Most of them are grossly ignorant; and therefore it is no wonder that thay are grossly confident. I never argue with them; but take what I apprehend to be the most likely method to silence them. When they begin to talk about bad ministers, bad laws, and the poor Americans, as they style these rebels, I reply, 'I don't understand politics.' Solomon has observed that 'the heart of kings is unsearchable,' Prov. xxv. 3. For kings have their *arcanà imperii*, and reasons of state: of which private persons (who know not their counsels, motives, or intelligence) cannot be judges; and therefore ought not, as they are not too apt to do on every occasion, so peremptorily to pass their judgment. Nor is the government of a kingdom their province. The scriptures have enjoined me 'to honour the king,' 1 Pet. ii. 17; and 'not to despise government, or speak evil of dignities,' 2 Pet. ii. 13; 'to be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,' 1 Pet. ii. 13; and 'to speak evil of no man,' Tit. iii. 2; especially not of the higher powers. When I find that, notwithstanding they perceive my disinclination to any political discourse, they will still persist in it, and reply, 'Ay, but things are so and so.' I continue to remind them of what the scriptures have declared to be their duty, as well as mine: and express my further sentiments to this effect: It may be as you assert, but my bible tells me, 'Thou shalt not revile the gods, that is, magistrates, supreme or subordinate, who are God's representatives; nor curse the rulers of thy people,' Exod. xxii. 28; 'Thou shalt be subject to principalities, and powers, and obey magistrates,' Tit. iii. 1. This I find the best and most reasonable way of treating these doughty politicians. But really things look very dark, and God seems to be giving us up to a spirit of infatuation and licentiousness."—Mr. ORTON, 1775.

LETTER XIX.

February 8th, 1776.

Dear Sir,—I was glad to hear that you got safe to Wormington, through so many perils and difficulties by reason of the snow; and perhaps with some misgiving thoughts for having left your flock so long and in so dangerous a time (Christmas), as they never more need their pastor's watchful eye; and even his presence might be some restraint from excess. You will now, however, set yourself closely and diligently to your great work, and do them all the good in your power. I am pleased to find that you received the box of books safe, which I desire you to accept; hoping they will be useful to you, and consequently to your people. I could wish you would have Bishop Patrick's Comments on the Old Testament,* with Lowth on the Prophets;† as likewise Baxter's Works,‡ always at your elbow.

You have probably heard of the death of the Earl of Radnor. Dr. and Mrs. Stonhouse came home last Thursday from Longford Castle (his Lordship's seat in Wiltshire), extremely fatigued, having gone through great perils owing to the depth of the snow and the severity of the season. The doctor gives an agreeable and most instructive account of his patron's death; to whom, being called up in the middle of the night, he administered the sacrament, together with Lady Radnor, some of his children, and servants, before he expired, with which he seems

* Character of Bishop Patrick as a commentator, by Dr. Doddridge.—Patrick is the most considerable in our language from Genesis to Solomon's Song. He has made great use of former writers, some Jewish, others Christian; very valuable: compare it with original; good system of Jewish antiquities.—MS.

† Character of Lowth, by the same.—A judicious commentary on the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi; in which there are some good critical notes, and a fine collection of parallel scriptures.—MS.

‡ Character of Baxter, as a practical writer, by the same.—His style inaccurate, because he had no regular education; and because he wrote continually in the views of eternity; but judicious, nervous, spiritual, and remarkably evangelical; a manly eloquence, and the most evident proof of an amazing genius; with respect to which, he may not improperly be called the English Demosthenes; exceeding proper for conviction: see his Saints' Rest, all his Treatises on Conversion, and especially his Call to the Unconverted, Divine Life, and Counsels to Young Men: few were ever more instrumental for awakening and converting more souls. His book of Converse with God in Solitude is a most sublime piece of devotion; his Gildas Salvianus is a most extraordinary piece, and should be read by every young minister before he takes a people under his stated care; and I think the practical part of it deserves to be read every two or three years; for nothing has a greater tendency to awaken the spirit of a minister to that zeal in his work, for want of which many good men are but shadows of what, by the blessing of God, they might be, if the maxims and measures laid down in that incomparable treatise were strenuously pursued.—MS. See also Orton's Life of Doddridge.

As a writer, Mr. Baxter had the approbation of some of his greatest contemporaries; such as Archbishop Usher, Bishop Wilkins, Dr. Barrow, Robert Boyle, Esq., and Mr. Addison.—See Fawcett's Preface to his Abridgement of Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest.

I asked him what works of Richard Baxter I should read. He said, "Read any of them; they are all good."—Boswell's Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, vol. iv.

to have been much affected. Dr. Hele of Salisbury, and Dr. Stonhouse * attended him,; and Dr. Moysey of Bath met them in consultation: but all medical help was vain. His Lordship had many excellent qualities in his character, and paid more regard to Christianity and practical religion, than, I fear, most of our great people now do. The doctor intimates that he had a strong sense of religion, and that he took leave of his family like a tender husband and father, and a sincere Christian.†

The difference of sensible persons in their judgment, concerning our friend's late publication, is no way uncommon in such cases. I wish he would not mind their frivolous objections. Let him remember the story of the old man and his son and the ass. There is no pleasing every body, and to attempt it is foolish.‡ A person once wrote to Dr. Doddridge (not with the greatest humility) on the impropriety and unsoundness of one or two of his positions in a publication. He knowing it to be vain and endless to enter into such particular, only replied, Quod scripsi, scripsi, "What I have written, I have written." The main concern of every Christian, especially every minister, should be to please God; which whoever does, may set his heart at rest, whether he please or displease man, yea even his friends: nay, if he displease those whom he wished to please; nay, and doth it in the very point in which he hoped and expected most of all to please them. The doctor has too much reason to complain of the unkindness of some of his more lukewarm brethren towards him. May God mend them; I cannot. Complaining will not avail, but only irritate ourselves and them, and tend to make us less thankful for the many, many comforts we enjoy. I have sent him the following lines.

The wise in secret always hide their pain.
And only, where redress is sure, complain:

* Dr. Stonhouse was for two and twenty years physician to the county infirmary at Northampton, and in very extensive practice; which he was obliged to give up on account of his health. After which the Earl of Radnor gave him a living; and on his Lordship's illness, he, in conjunction with Dr. Hele, acted in his medical capacity, which he never did after his having quitted his profession as a physician, unless to his parishioners. or when desired by some particular friend.

† His Lordship died Jan. 28, 1776, aged 50.—"A knowing and virtuous gentleman," says Bishop Burnet "who understands his religion and loves it, who practises the rules of virtue, without affectation and moroseness, who knows enough of law to keep his neighbours in order, and to give them good advice; who keeps meetings for his county, and restrains vice and disorder at them; who lives hospitably, frugally, and charitably; who respects and encourages good clergymen, and worships God both in his family and at church: who educates his children well, who treats his servants gently, and deals equitably with his tenants and all others with whom he has any concerns; such a man shines, and is a public blessing to all that see him or come near him. Some such instances are yet left among us; but alas! there are not many of them."—Conclusion of his own Time; addressed to men of all orders and degrees. A most excellent performance; which was printed separately in a small form some years ago; and since (viz. 1794) by Dr. Johnstone, physician of Worcester.

‡ "The judgment of the world is so whimsical and injudicious, and their favours so capriciously, absurdly, and most unjustly bestowed, as we may see every day, that if a man will fret at such things, he hath nothing to do but fret on, till death puts an end to his foolish sorrows."—Jortin.

Contented rest with necessary ill,
And what they must submit to, seem to will.
Whilst babbling fools, repining at their fate,
Their wants, their wrongs, their discontents relate;
And, ignorant of the make of human mind,
Solicit pity, where contempt they find.*

I think Rapin's History, considered as a history of England in general, and not of a particular period, is the best we have. His being a foreigner, makes it probable that he was more impartial than a native Englishman would be likely to be. He is in high reputation as an historian as far as the revolution, where his history ends. Tindal's Continuation is worth reading; but it is a tedious heavy work, and spun out merely to get money. The subscribers, of which I was one, thought themselves ill used and imposed upon by him. However, if it should come in your way, you may receive information from it. But for a short view of English history, of that period which is most important to us, I think none is equal to Bishop Burnet's History of his own Time; and for a short abstract Welwood's Memoirs.

I thank God I am as comfortable, as to my health, as I can expect to be. Here is my state from an old writer: "Multâ cautelâ custoditur salus corporis; custodita, cito amittitur; amissa, cum gravi labore reparatur; et tamen reparata, semper, in dubio est." I feel the meaning of this description. May my spirit feel the good effect it should have upon me! I heartily wish you increasing comfort and success in your great work. Now is the time, when you have little parochial duty, to apply closely to study, and increase your stock of critical, scriptural,

* Near the time the above letter was written, Mr Orton wrote to Dr. Stonhouse in the following manner (communicated to the editor by Dr. S.).

Feb. 17, 1776.

Dear Doctor,—About the time your last letter arrived, I had for some particular reasons been thinking how many mercies I had to be thankful for; and it led me to add largely to the catalogue.—I thank God, that I am not very rich; that I am not a lord; nor a lord's son; nor a lord's chaplain, or dependent: that I have no connexion with great people; that I am not a double-chinned doctor, with two or three fat livings or sinecures, living upon the sweat and brains of a poor curate; that I never worshipped a golden calf for preferment and gain, nor made the ministry a spiritual traffic; that I have done what I could to support, assist, and encourage my poor brethren; that I never was in danger of substituting modes and forms and externals, for the life and power of religion; but learned from Dr. Doddridge a different judgment, relish, and conduct; that amidst the corruptions of the clergy of your church and ours, there are many upright, pious, zealous divines, who shine as lights in the world; who, though they do not meet with deserved preferment; because they will not desecrate themselves to seek it in the usual way, will make a glorious figure in the church triumphant. Among this number I reckon Dr. Stonhouse, and therefore esteem and honour him, however others neglect him. I know not whether I should wish you a parish in B., for what good can you hope to do among such a people? I wish you were somewhere, where your labours would be more valued and more successful."

"The world is full of ill nature; and I have daily experienced so much of it, that I could almost fall out with mankind; if it were not for a few excellent friends, of which Mr. H. is one of the dearest. We must expect our share in the troubles of life; but let us take care to live upon good terms with God, and our own consciences, and we need not be deeply concerned about the malice of our open enemies, or the more dangerous treachery of our professed friends."—Mr. Doddridge to Mr. Hughes, April 15, 1722.—*MS.*

and practical knowledge, that if providence should call you out to a larger and more public station, and a greater sphere of usefulness,* you may be qualified for it, and equal to it.

Your affectionate and faithful friend,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XX.

May 22, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—As you have Palmer's Abridgement of Baxter's Reformed Pastor, you can need no further advice from me about your parishioners. I think that book is instar omnium on the subject. You will no doubt call at every house in your parish, and make prudent inquiries into their state; whether they attend the church and sacrament, have prayer in their families, catechize their children, and take pains with their servants. It is easier to preach acceptably at such places as B. than to converse intelligibly and profitably with country families. A late author (I forget whom) saith, St. Anthony's preaching to the pigs (according to the popish legend) was only preaching to country farmers. But as the gospel is adapted to them, I pray God you may be instrumental in carrying it to their hearts.

I do not think Macknight on the Gospels (though a very useful, judicious book) will do for Mr. * * * to read in his family. I make use of Mr .Henry's Exposition or Dr. Doddridge's Expositor in mine. When I read the latter, my family have their bibles in their hands, and I desire them to turn to that evangelist whose account is most large in the section. Some persons read only the text and improvement in their families, as Dr. Adams, &c. What I say in my Religious Exercises,† is, "I would inculcate upon all families, where it can be performed, the use of psalmody:" and then I give my reasons; meaning where it can be performed decently, by a sufficient number, and capable of tolerable singing; and prudently on account of the situation and vicinity. Is there any thing to be objected to in this? Mr. * * * is mistaken as to what he says of singing low: it may be quite harmonious, and yet no louder than the

* Which it hath since done; and in the town and parish, where this good man was born, and where for so many years he exercised his faithful ministry.

† See Vol. ii. p. 1. "These sermons," say the Monthly Reviewers, "are not distinguished by any remarkable elegance of style, or accuracy of language and composition; but they have a much truer recommendation; they are serious and practical; well adapted to do real service to every attentive reader, and evidently flowing from a heart under the warm influences of benevolence and piety." After some other encomiums, the same writers add, "We are persuaded that the present work is calculated to produce real advantage to mankind; and we sincerely join our wishes with those of the author, that it may contribute to revive and promote the cause of true religion, with which the interests of virtue and morality are essentially connected."—ACCOUNT.

common key of reading. One or two facts are worth a thousand theories and suppositions. I have always lived in families where singing was used; and I never found nor heard of any inconveniences attending the practice of it in my father's family at Shrewsbury, though he lived in a narrow street, and which was the greatest thoroughfare in the town; or in either of Dr. Doddridge's houses at Northampton, or at my own house at Shrewsbury, or many other houses here. One may have a worse opinion of men than they deserve. And let religious families first make a trial, and then proceed, or drop the exercise, as they find it convenient or otherwise. "Let not your good be evil spoken of," is an excellent rule. But if what is good in itself must be omitted for fear of that, there is an end of all goodness. A pious farmer of my congregation used to sing, as well as read and pray, in his family. His reprobate landlord, who lived near him, hath come by with his rakish companions, and contrasted the psalm with a horse-laugh, and an indecent song. The squire's son, who is now a serious man, hath acknowledged to the farmer's widow, that the conduct of his father and Co. shocked him when a boy; and that the steadiness of the farmer, and his consistent behaviour in all other instances, had a great influence in giving his mind a serious turn. When vice is bold, it is sad that virtue should be sneaking. Till I see or hear of some well attested instances, in which the credit of religion has suffered by singing in families, consistently religious, the passage must stand.

It is many years since I read Watts on the Love of God, and I have not the book now by me. Dr. Watts's Treatises, Hymns, &c. on that subject, do not suit me. He is too much of an enamorato, and this has been the sole objection I have heard against this piece. I do not love fulsome, luscious divinity. And the good doctor allowed in his preface to Mrs. Rowe's Devout Exercises, that many of his composures in younger life were of that kind, which his maturer judgment disapproved.* The passions in our frame should be consecrated to God, and it is desirable our devotion and love to him should be fervent; but as there is so much of the animal in them, and men have different constitutions and relishes, too much stress must not be laid upon them.†

When I had the pleasure of seeing our friend Mr. * *, I was afraid lest public concerns should have injured his health, or

* "Let it be observed, that it was much the fashion, even among some divines of eminence, in former years, to express the fervours of devout love to our Saviour in the style of the Song of Solomon: and I must confess that several of my composures in verse, written in younger life, were led by those examples unwarily into this track. But if I may be permitted to speak the sense of mature age, I can hardly think this the happiest language in which Christians should generally discover their warm sentiments of religion, since the clearer and more spiritual revelations of the New Testament."

† It is observed in the life of Mr. Henry Grove, a learned and judicious divine among the dissenters, and who was Dr. Watts's intimate friend; that "he knew also to reserve his devotion pure from the amorous, thinking the sentiments and language of

disturbed the composure of his mind. But perhaps were we to decline attending to such concerns, and confine ourselves wholly to the duties of our families, and functions, our minds might be ready to prey upon themselves for want of variety, and through a constant attachment to one track of thought and action. While Providence has favoured him with almost every domestic comfort to so high a degree, and given him so much skill, reputation, and success in his professional capacity, it would grieve one to find that his benevolent concern and attempts for the good of mankind impaired his health, or prevented him from relishing so many other enjoyments. Great caution and steadiness are necessary, that we suffer not in these particulars; and I have a peculiar reason to give the hint to every friend I love, as I have suffered so much myself by not attending to it.

My two volumes of Sermons on Practical Subjects,* were advertised a few days ago. I wish they may do good. The more I see of many modern sermons the less I like them, and the less I think they are calculated for usefulness. I would willingly write modern sense and accuracy, with the ancient simplicity, pungency, and evangelical strain. I have just been perusing an account of the donation of a missal to a college of popish priests; under the title of which the donor had written, "When you read this, pray for the soul of A. B. who gave it." So I say in the protestant sense at closing this letter.

Yours affectionately,
JOB ORTON.

P.S. I do not think you too free in desiring the favour of me to revise the sermon† you intend to print: I wish you do not think me too free in the remarks I have sent you upon it. I submit it to your consideration, whether it may be proper to print it at present, or some time hence, when you will be better acquainted with your parishioners, and they with you. I do not say with Horace, Nonumque prematur in annum; but would read (with Dr. Byrom) unumque.

a sensual passion very unfit to be addressed to the great God, or his Son; and that the indulging this as divine love had greatly corrupted religion. In his most juvenile performances there is but little of this strain, and as his judgment improved he wholly omitted it. Mr. Grove thought divine love to be the love of a character supremely wise, holy, and good; and to be most fitly expressed, not by the fond language of the animal passion, but by an exalted veneration of these excellencies, and a delightful contemplating them; by the steady choice and pursuit of true goodness, by a cheerful obedience to the divine commands, and an imitation of the moral perfections we admire."

Speaking of another treatise of Dr. Watts, Mr. Orton thus writes: "If you have not Dr. Watts's Orthodoxy and Charity united, I wish you could procure it: as perhaps it gives the best idea of orthodoxy, without verging to antinomianism, that I ever saw."

* Reprinted in vol. i. "The sermons are thirty-six in number, and testify, in the strongest manner, the ardent solicitude with which the author endeavoured to inspire mankind with the principles of piety and virtue."—ACCOUNT.

† The Country Clergyman's Advice to his Parishioners: preached in the parish church of Wormington, Gloucestershire, March 31, 1776.

LETTER XXI.

August, 1776.

Dear Sir,—I began to think it long till I heard from Mr. * * *, who is visiting his friends in London. I was ready to suspect that the air of the metropolis had had the same effect upon him as it hath upon most of my friends and correspondents who live within its influence. They reside in the centre of intelligence, relating to literary, political, and ecclesiastical affairs, whilst I am thrown into an obscure corner, out of the way and knowledge of any one of them. Yet I enter so deeply into the concerns of my fellow-creatures, that I am eager to know how the world goeth on; but they will not indulge my curiosity, though they can most of them do it fully in a quarter of an hour's time by the use of short hand. I must therefore be content, and value those few, very few, real friends so much the more, who, like Mr. * * *, reckon themselves in debt from the receipt of a letter till it is answered, and cannot be easy till they have cleared the account.* Indeed I can send them no intelligence from hence; it would therefore be more kind in them, by their correspondence, to make up the deficiency. I see more and more reason, the longer I live in the world, to apply to myself part of Dr. King's epitaph;

Permultos habui amicos,
At veros, stabiles, gratos,
Perpaucissimos.

If you should think it worth your while to write to Mr. * * *, concerning his remarks on your printed sermon, pray cut the matter short, and tell him, you allow him the right of private judgment, and of preaching agreeably to what he apprehends to be the meaning of the word of God, and that you expect he will allow you the same; and that to censure and condemn his Christian brethren for thinking and preaching differently from himself, is as contrary to reason, good manners, and especially the word of God, as any heresy or vice whatsoever. Whether a man will be condemned hereafter for preaching and thinking differently from me may be doubtful, and is an affair in which I have nothing to do. But I am sure a man will be condemned for a bitter, uncharitable, and censorious spirit, if I understand the terms of salvation as laid down in the gospel. See the beginning of the seventh chapter of St. Matthew. You are acquainted with Mr. * *, who has some such a troublesome neigh-

* Fain would I inculcate upon my younger friends and brethren the maxim of Gangenelli; "If the lowest of the people," says he, "writes to me, I esteem it an honour, and should think myself very blameable and ill-mannered if I were not to answer him."—Orton.

bour as your letter describes * * * to be. He has already done him much mischief; and will, I fear, injure his comfort and usefulness. A highwayman robs me of my purse; and there is an end perhaps of the business, of his oaths, and his injustice to me. A Christian brother robs me of my esteem, reputation, peace, comfort, and usefulness; and at the same time lifts up his hands and eyes to heaven, and seems to say, "Let the Lord be glorified." If you are at a loss to know which is the greatest —— of the two, and most deserves to be ——, I will tell you in my next.

There is a great deal to be learnt from Dr. Clarke's Works, and therefore they ought, and deserve to be read carefully. I have most of them, and have often read them. His sermons, which I have lately gone over again, are all sensible and judicious; and he has an excellent collection of parallel texts and good definitions of words and things; though with respect to the former, often more than is needful to explain his meaning. The applications of his sermons are too short, and want pathos. This he lamented himself, but could not alter his method, as his cool philosophical head would not admit that warmth and unction (as the French call it) which is very desirable in an application. He was no Socinian, and is much more evangelical than most of his admirers. His paraphrase upon the Evangelists appears to me to drop short of the true design of the evangelists in many passages, but contains many excellent things. His translation and notes upon Rohault I have not read, since I was at the academy, but his other tracts I am better acquainted with. He, like many others, gives what I think a wrong idea of baptism, and lays too much stress upon it, and the circumstances of it. I find the same fault with some things in Sherlock's book upon Death, which I have lately been reading again with great pleasure, and I hope some profit. Dr. Clarke's Life by Bishop Hoadley is excellently well written.

I have procured the Bishop of Cork's (Dr. Browne) Sermons, recommended to me by Dr. Stonhouse, and have read several of them. His style is manly and easy; but as they are levelled principally against the Socinians, they are rather dry and controversial than serious and practical. But I hope to be better acquainted with him soon, and that I shall find some things more plain and practical in the other discourses.* He was the author of a deep metaphysical treatise on the Procedure and Limits of the Human Understanding; which my understanding, being so limited, could never comprehend. He published likewise a small tract against the reigning toast in Ireland—"To the immortal memory of King William," as if it were praying for the dead. The consequence of which was, that the Whigs were used to add to their toast—"in spite of the Bishop of Cork."

* He is a very practical writer.

I will send you his sermons when an opportunity offers for that purpose.

"What a world do we live in!" exclaims Mr. * * *. Aye; in truth, it is bad enough; so our fathers, grandfathers, &c., since Adam found it.* That is not a reason, as I tell him, why we should not, but why we should, endeavour to make it better; and never relax in matters of duty, conscience, and attempts to do good. I hope he will not be discouraged. "Do what you can whether men will hear or forbear," is our rule; and it shall turn to us for a testimony. May God keep up the ardour of our spirits, amidst so many chilling circumstances, and favour all our pious attempts!

I shall rank Miss * * among my heroines, as I doubt not our Master will among his, if she continue (as I pray God she may) to reverence conscience and scripture, and to scorn the scorners (Prov. iii. 34). She will shine in a noble assembly a thousand and ten thousand years hence, when the gay folk of this world will arise to shame and everlasting contempt.

The sudden changes of the weather have affected me much. This day se'nnight Fahrenheit's thermometer was at 76 deg.: yesterday and to-day at 56 and 57 deg. What human frame but must be in some degree affected by so great a variation? My spirits this week have risen as high as alacrity: but when they get down to dejection and fear, it is very uncomfortable. With such changes and sensations God is pleased to exercise us poor mortals, "to make our hearts better." I wish I could more clearly see this end answering in my own case.

I am, yours affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. Mr. Whiston (whom you speak of) I once spent an hour or two with, and was much pleased to see and converse with the honest old man; though I remember his great confidence displeased me. He was walking from London into Rutlandshire, where his son-in-law lived, and where he himself died, and he called and breakfasted at Dr. Doddridge's at Northampton.

LETTER XXII.

May, 1777.

DEAR SIR,—It gives me a very sensible pleasure to find that my letter was agreeable to Mr. * * *, and any way contributed to alleviate his sorrows. To weep with them that weep, and to

* In such a world as this is, we must not expect every thing, nor many things, quite agreeable. How would our virtue be exercised and improved, and we trained up for rest but by some painful discipline? I often think of honest Sancho Panza, when Don Quixote asked him the success of his commission, and whether they should mark the day with a black or a white stone, replied, "Truly, sir, if you will be ruled by me, with neither; but with good brown ochre." Such is life, and it becomes us to make ourselves easy, and not aggravate evils.—ORTON.

comfort them that mourn, are most amiable, as well as essential duties of our holy religion; and I have been so long in the school of affliction myself, that I hope I have learned, at least, these lessons in it; though I find, and much lament it, that among many eager and florid professors of religion there is a great want of sensibility and tenderness. Amidst their zeal for notions, terms, and phrases, there is something wanting to sweeten and soften their spirits, and open their narrow hearts to that compassion and feeling for others, which is the glory of the man and the Christian. In short, there are many brutes upon two legs; and woe to him who is dependent upon them, or connected with them! I am somewhat concerned that copies of my letter have been given to others, as it was written very hastily, from the fulness of a sympathizing heart; and I can hardly now recollect a thought or expression in it; but if it affords any consolation to my companions in affliction, I shall rejoice. If its contents had any thing of propriety and suitableness in them, it arose entirely from hence, that I was much affected with the occasion and warmed with the subject; and the passions, you know, are always eloquent. I wish ministers would attend to this thought, and see that their own hearts be first deeply impressed; then they will speak as they ought—a word in season, both in the pulpit and in the parlour.

I have been reading Dr. Campbell's Fast Sermon,* which pleases me much, and is, I think, calculated to do great good. I wish it were printed in a cheap form to give away among the people in general.† Surely some of our loyalists will be at the expense of doing this, when the patriots (as they call themselves) are at so much pains and expense to reprint, translate, and disperse Dr. Price's Observations on Civil Liberty. I shall recommend it to all those with whom I have any acquaintance. But I hope the nation is growing wiser, calmer, and more loyal. I know few dissenting ministers (except in London, Bristol, and some other populous places), but who are loyal, and blame the violence of the Americans and their abettors. All my neighbouring brethren, as far as I can judge, are among the quiet in the land.

I attend to Dr. * * *'s observation about the Magdalene Hospital. There is no evidence in the New Testament that Mary Magdalene was a notorious sinner. On the contrary, she was a pious lady of quality, who had been troubled with an epilepsy or some disorder, which the Jews used to impute to the agency of one, two, three, or more demons, according to its strength and virulency. Nor is there any proof that she was the woman who had been a sinner, and washed the feet of

* On the nature, extent, and importance of the duty of allegiance.

† This was afterwards done, by the encouragement of Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester; and great numbers were dispersed through England and America.

Christ. See Doddridge on the place. Dr. Lardner published a small tract to show how absurdly the prostitutes' hospital was called the Magdalene house, and what reflection it threw on the name and memory of Mary Magdalene; but notwithstanding what he said on the subject, it continued to be called by that name.

If the scheme of redemption be represented as Christ's prevailing upon the Father to show mercy and confer favour to his creatures, who was always ready and disposed to do it, it is a very false and unscriptural scheme. But what is more common than for a parent to forgive a child at the intercession of a common friend, when the parent is disposed to do it; is glad of such an intercessor, that he might not punish; and desires or appoints such a person to interpose, that he might secure his authority and the child's reverence; and not lead him to think he does not see his dislike, or will easily pass by offences committed against him? Let me advise you to read Tomkins's Christ the Mediator again and again, till you have well digested his scheme. It contains the best defence and explanation of the atonement I ever met with, and fully confutes all the Socinian writers.*

God is merciful to our land in giving us fine refreshing showers, which have put a new face on this dry part of the country. But they affect my feeble constitution, and I have been very languid and low, though every place and being around me, since this change of weather, smiles and rejoices. May I grow more fit for the world of everlasting spring and health, holiness and joy! Continue your prayers for me. I am,

Your affectionate and faithful friend,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. Bishop North preached a sermon for our charity-school last Sunday. I did not hear him, for I cannot bear crowds, and have not itching ears. I am told it was a pertinent and useful discourse.

* "Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man, an Advocate for us with the Father, and a Propitiation for the sins of the world. Second edition; to which is now added, by another gentleman, an essay to prove the credibility of the gospel, from the doctrine of the efficacy of Christ's death for the redemption of the world.—London, 1761. This is a very sensible performance (by Mr. Tomkins), in which the author endeavours to establish the literal sense of those passages in scripture which concern our redemption by Christ; he looks upon the death of Christ as a real sacrifice, and represents the notion the scripture gives us of these things as consistent with the dictates of reason and natural religion." See the present Bishop of Landaff's (Dr. Watson) catalogue of books in divinity, at the conclusion of the sixth volume of his Theological Tracts. See also a Letter from a Clergyman to one of his Parishioners, on the doctrine of the atonement.

LETTER XXIII.

July 5th, 1777.

DEAR SIR,—I could not open your last letter without tearing away at the same time a part of the writing contained in it, which is bad, especially when written in short-hand; therefore it is best, when you have gotten down to the bottom of the first page of your paper, to turn to the next, that is, the back of that, and not to go on obliquely, as you have done in this letter. Always take care to leave that part of the paper where the seal is to be blank, that the writing may not be torn. I had a letter from a friend lately, who desired me to transact a little business for him, which was the chief purport of his letter; but he had unfortunately put the wafer on the most material part of the commission, so that I could not know what he had desired me to do for him. This, you will say, is an odd kind of an introduction to a letter: but I have heard worse and less pertinent introductions to many sermons. I have often admired the character which a great lady in France once gave to one of the officers of that court,—"that he was excellent at little things." There is more in this than most people are aware of.

I have sent you Chandler's Paraphrase on the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, &c., which I wish you to read carefully, as it will enlarge your mind and ideas. He has some valuable criticisms, but they are not all equally satisfactory. I would not have you preach in his style and manner, but you will do well to imitate his strong sense and good reasoning in plainer language; and there are some very excellent and striking remarks in his practical reflections.

I have read Miss More's Essays to Young Ladies, with which I am very much pleased; as containing excellent prudential cautions, and admirable religious maxims. She writes so well, so usefully, and with such a strong tincture of rational and manly piety, that I would have every reader enter fully into her sentiments and advices, which are adapted to do much good.

Blair's Sermons are indeed judicious, lively, elegant, and evangelical; but not sufficiently plain, I think, for common readers. I hope they will be of much service among the judicious and polite, who will probably be inclined to read them.

I had a letter lately from Dr. Stonhouse: a part of my answer to which was as follows. "I have rode out several times this week; as I hope you have done. It is good for your health; it is also good for one's temper. I have often found the benefit of this receipt:

'Tis better, friend, to labour than to fret;
To cure the spleen, there 's nothing like a sweat.
When times are bad, and neighbours never worse,
Men, manners to reform, come, take your horse,
A mile reforms them: but if aught remain
Unpurged, 'tis but to ride as far again."*

I have lately lost a valuable friend here, which event has much depressed my spirits. I am just returned from an excursion into Staffordshire, about three miles off, and find my spirits better; so that I hope to be able to-day to visit the afflicted widow and family.

I am pleased and thankful that I am quiet here, and that I can (as I think St. Jerome says) retire to my tugurium† and bless God that I dare sleep when I can, and say that aught is my own; and there deplore my barren ministry for thirty years almost, and implore the blessing of heaven upon the world and the church. I am better and worse, as to my health, as usual, but it never verges to the borders of being well. But when a man is turned of sixty he must expect to sink and decay. Some noted writer of antiquity says, "It is unbecoming a man, when arrived to that age, to hold out his hand to a physician to feel his pulse. He should be content to march off the stage." I wish I could do more in the devotional way; but I trust that he who knows our frame will accept a willing mind and honest intentions to serve his sacred cause.

I am, your affectionate,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. I am concerned lest you should injure your health by too close an application to your studies. Walk out often; and when you write or read, be sure to keep yourself in as upright a posture as you can. Write upon an inclined plane, but a standing desk is best. Nothing is more injurious to the health of young divines and students than stooping.‡

LETTER XXIV.

DEAR SIR,—I have a miscellany to send you, and it is some comfort to me that it will cost you nothing in postage.

I can make great allowance for the little indiscretions of Mr. * * *, as he is so young a man. He knew the great sensi-

* See likewise the Spectator, No. 115.

† A cottage, a house in the country, &c.

Pauperis tugurî culmen.—VIRGIL.

‡ "The attitude of a man at study," says Dr. Tissot, "cannot but be prejudicial to health. The folds which the vessels are thrown into at the top of the thigh and in the bend of the knees, while a man is sitting, interrupt the circulation in the lower extremities, which, in process of time, must necessarily suffer from this circumstance; the bending of the body constrains the abdominal viscera, disturbs their functions, and the digestive powers are disordered from a new cause. Frictions are also of much use, and

bility and delicacy of Mr. * *, and therefore should have said nothing of the business which he communicated to him. We must deal cautiously with persons of his scrupulosity and exactness, and especially never divulge, or give the most distant intimation of what they wish to have concealed. It may appear to us a trifle; but if it seems important to them, that is a sufficient reason why we should be upon our guard. And it is best always to err on that hand, and to be particularly solicitous not to utter every thing one may hear from a friend. We ought to suppose he speaks to us in confidence, though there may be no express charge or seeming desire of secrecy. If a person, for whom we have a great regard, shows us any particular attention and concern for our service and interest, it is highly proper to thank God for it, and to show them all gratitude; but to say as little of it as may be to others. As Dr. Fordyce's Addresses to Young Men, which I am reading (in which, amidst great pomposity of language and studied antitheses, there is much good sense and advice suited to their case), and which now lie before me, and your young friend may not have seen them, I will transcribe a passage from them, which you may communicate to him or not, as you think proper. "From a consciousness of right intentions, from the honest ardour of their natures, from the apprehensive simplicity so incident to generous minds, they are apt to forget certain forms, ceremonies, and precautions. These, however small in themselves, have often a mighty stroke in the affairs of life, and especially go further as they are observed or neglected, to escape or incur censure, to obtain or forfeit praise, than the inexperienced or incautious will easily conceive. It is much to be regretted, that some excellent spirits fail of appearing excellent in a number of cases, for want of these inferior attentions, which ought by no means to be omitted, &c." Vol. i.

I am glad you are pleased with the small present I made you of my Sacramental Meditations. I wish for your prayers, that they may be instrumental in doing good. Most of your books, and ours, on the Lord's Supper, are too dry and systematic, and not enough of the plain and the devotional kind. Many worthy and religious persons have often complained to me, that they could not fix their thoughts on these occasions, for want of some subjects of meditation; especially some texts of scripture, which would naturally bring the thoughts to their minds. A general meditation, without being grounded on some text, was by no means so agreeable and profitable. These

not to be neglected. If every morning we rub the whole body, perspiration is encouraged and the circulation quickened; which is, indeed, so much accelerated by strong frictions continued for a long time, that in some degree they may supply the want of exercise. The ancients, who were sensible of all the advantages resulting from this practice, not only used it as a remedy, but also as a daily method of preserving health."—Dr. Tissot on the Diseases incident to Literary and Sedentary Persons.

meditations were delivered before and after the administration of that ordinance. I think my printing work is now done.* I hope I am thankful for the acceptance, and I trust usefulness, with which some of my publications have been honoured. Other authors have a more shining province, in learned, ingenious, and philosophical pieces. I am content with doing good to souls.

What will become of my expositions on the Old Testament I know not. I fear the plan I proposed for interweaving them with Clarke's notes, in the manner of Whitby and Doddridge, adding a practical improvement at the end of each chapter, will not be executed. I wish it may; but I can do nothing to it myself; and the person from whom I hoped for the execution will not, I fear, attempt it, though he hath strength and ability of body and mind to do it soon, and do it well. I must leave it to Providence, and those who may come after me.†

Dr. Taylor's Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans is an elaborate and learned work, containing many excellent things, and many important and valuable criticisms, and well deserves your careful perusal; but I think he has too much limited the

* This was Mr. Orton's last publication: relative to which the editor of these letters begs leave to subjoin the following testimonies borne to it. The late Rev. Mr. Hunter, vicar of Weaverham, in Cheshire, the author of several valuable publications, wrote thus of it to a friend: "Upon your recommendation I have ordered and repeatedly read Mr. Orton's Sacramental Meditations. I think I never read a book better calculated for the purpose of spiritual improvement. The shortness of the sections, the plainness of the style, the clearness of the method, render it peculiarly fit for the reading and retention of the uninstructed in low, and the indolent in high life; whilst a flow of piety, an apt and happy application of scripture, an experimental sense of religion, and a profound knowledge of the divine life, and of the deep things of God, must recommend it to the perusal and approbation of those who have made the greatest progress in goodness."

Dr. Tucker, the late venerable Dean of Gloucester, wrote of it to the same person in the following manner. "Pray thank Mr. Orton for his book in my name. I am charmed, and I hope edified too with it; which I make my constant companion. As I read, I am delighted to find the great divine and the able controversialist concealing himself under the better character of the pious and humble Christian, and avoiding all the parade of human learning. A man who was less a scholar and less a Christian would have stuffed his book with a thousand quotations."

The late excellent Dr. Adams, master of Pembroke College, Oxford, in a letter to Mr. Orton writes thus: "The design of your book was quite new to me, and is, I think, happily executed. In our large communions (such as I have often seen at St. Chad's) it is the very book I should wish in every one's hands. The Dean of Gloucester is much pleased with it, as he is indeed with all your writings. You have perhaps done more good of the best sort, under the necessity of retirement, than you could have done in better health, which universally brings dissipation along with it. This is a consolation of the highest and noblest kind, which I am persuaded you have a right to, and I hope God will in your weakest hours enable you to take to yourself."

† "In the course of Mr. Orton's ministerial service he delivered a short and plain exposition of the Old Testament, with devotional and practical reflections; which exposition and reflections have recently been published from the author's manuscripts, for the use of families, by the (late) Rev. Robert Gentleman, of Kidderminster, Worcestershire, in six large volumes, octavo. This work has met with a very favourable reception from the pious world, and is calculated for general utility. Of the notes it cannot be said that they are eminently critical; but they often convey valuable instruction; and the reflections are admirably adapted to promote the purpose of serious religion."—Kippis's Account.

apostle's sense. Few persons have ever studied the bible more than he, or have been better acquainted with scriptural phraseology; but he was too much warped by his own theories. You will find many good remarks upon this performance in Doddridge's preface to the second edition of his Sermons on Regeneration. His Key to the Apostolic Writings is prefixed to his paraphrase, and is designed to explain the chief phrases made use of in the Epistles; but which he appears to me to have mistaken in many instances. Though I do not like his general scheme on the Romans and his Key,* yet his notion of the doctrine of election seems right and scriptural.

I question whether Dr. Doddridge's Sermons against Popery will ever be published. What the doctor says of Mr. Grove as a writer, is that "he resembles Watts, but is not equally poetical; that he has many judicious and new thoughts, with great seriousness and sweetness." Bishop Burnet's conclusion of the History of his own Times was printed separately in a small form a few years ago, and many of them sold. I scarce know a book better calculated to do good. Hildrop's Miscellanies are entertaining, and may furnish you with some materials in your addresses to your Wormington farmers. Reeves's Apologies of the Fathers, in two volumes octavo, is a valuable translation of several important books. Have you ever seen Short Meditations on Select Portions of Scripture?† If not, I recommend it to you, as containing the substance of the heads and principal thoughts of about fifty excellent sermons.

Judge Ashurst is, I presume, of the same family as Sir Henry and Sir Samuel Ashurst; who were both of them men of eminent wisdom and piety. Sir Henry Ashurst wrote the life of Mr. Nathaniel Heywood, an ejected minister in Lancashire; so fond was he of him.

Your advice to me to eat my own book, is very good. But I daily stand corrected by my own publications, as it is easier to give advice than to take it. The hot weather hurts me; and now this cool damp air hurts me again. So subject am I to skyey influences, and the sport of every paltry atom.‡ But be the weather fair or foul, the ship is still under sail, near the port; and may it be the haven where I would be!

Yours affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

* "I shall be glad that Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Taylor, if he be recovered, may bestow his time and labours on unlocking Hebrew words, and hope the key he has left broken in the door of St. Paul's Epistles, will not be able to keep the true sense quite shut up: indeed I think the door opens almost of its own accord." Dr. Doddridge, to Dr. Wood. See Letters to and from Dr. Doddridge, published by Thomas Stedman, M.A. vicar of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, p. 303.

† By the Rev. Daniel Turner, of Abingdon, Berks.

‡ The ascarides.

P. S. November 29, 1777. The day of the month my good father died, thirty-six years ago; who had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself (3 John 12). I wish I were more like him.*

LETTER XXV.

March, 1778.

Dear Sir,—Though there is nothing in your last letter which requires an immediate answer, yet I am willing to write to so punctual a correspondent.

I have been looking over Sallust's History of Catiline's Conspiracy; in which I think you will find some things suitable to your purpose, particularly in his speech to the conspirators; which you will meet with towards the beginning of the history: where he pleads liberty as a ground for his undertaking; but mentions honour, power, wealth, &c. as also in their plan, and throws out some bitter reflections against the ministers and placemen of those days. "Quin igitur expergiscimini? En illa, illa, quam sæpe optastis, libertas; præterea divitiæ, decu, gloria in oculis sita sunt,"&c. In my edition is the following note on the word Libertas. Tacitus vere (lib. 9 Annal.) falso libertatis vocabulum obtendi ab iis, qui privatim degeneres, in publicum exitiosi, nihil spei, nisi per discordias, habeant. Grasw., one of the variorum authors. There is a great deal to the same purpose in Catiline's speech, and in other parts of the history; but it is near forty years ago since I last read it, which was with the pupils at Northampton, in 1739. I have long thought there are many passages in the account of that conspiracy very parallel to the present case of our nation, between loyal men, and those who are called patriots, and who choose, by a figure of speech, to call themselves Whigs, just as they call me a Tory.† Many are angry with me because I discountenance their disloyalty; but I despise their anger, as much as I dislike their principles and conduct. I would willingly be doing some good while I am here; and to promote loyalty, subjection, and peace, is doing good. I think I have already softened some sharp spirits among us, at least brought them to hold their tongues, or to be less confident. The king, I fear, hath an unfavourable opinion of the dissenters; for which we have foolishly given too much reason. I shall be sorry to find that your neighbour

* "His grandfather and father, who were grocers at Shrewsbury, of considerable property, were justly held in estimation for their piety, their good sense, their generosity, their usefulness, and their Christian virtues in general. His father died Nov. 18, 1741. —Dr. Kippis's Account.

† In moderation placing all my glory,
While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory.—Pope.

Mr. * * *, exposes himself and his ministry by his politics. An ancient bishop says, "What hath an ecclesiastic to do with politics?"* Lend him Palmer's Abridgment of Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

How can we be guilty by nature according to Mr. * * *'s ideas of original sin, since guilt is a consciousness of having acted wrong? Our guilt and misery consist in having sinned, or in consequence of our sins. Jeremiah calls children innocents, Jer. ii. 34, and Christ says, "Except ye be converted and become as little children," &c. Matt. xviii. 3. I cannot reconcile these passages, and many more, with the high notions of some persons concerning the doctrine of original sin. What I understand by that doctrine is (and which I take to be a fact), that as we are born with less perfect constitutions, so the passions are stronger and less governable, and thereby we are more easily led into sin. I have known so many instances, in which persons have excused their sins and bad tempers, by pleading original sin, that I would be extremely cautious how I gave the most distant encouragement to such absurd and dangerous pleas. So, likewise, by assurance I mean only a satisfactory evidence, removing all painful fears and doubts, though not every slight suspicion. See Mason on Self-Knowledge, part i. ch. xviii. and Bennet's Christian Oratory, sect 2. "Mr. * * * does not know the fact of the Spirit's sealing, comforting influence." The only difference between us is, that he thinks it cannot be particularly known to be the work of the Spirit, though he allows it to be so. I think, that in some cases it may be known; and the lives of some of the best and most rational Christians show that they thought they could distinguish between a divine impression and the natural workings of their own minds. Many texts I think encourage this thought, especially the following, Rom. viii. 16; 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5; Eph. i. 13.

My Book of Almanacks is of no great consequence. The Almanack I make use of is Wing's, which I think one of the best. There I keep a journal of the weather, and insert who preached the charity sermons here and at Shrewsbury, and what was collected; also any particular occurrence relating to the town. I also make references in it to the birth days of some of my friends; not that I may drink their health, but pray for them.† I find it of some use to have recourse to this, as to

* "I have no politics, but that of taking care to be engaged in none."—GANGANELLI.

"Be careful not to be occupied too much with secular affairs: those ecclesiastics who have been so engaged, have never yet found it the way to procure esteem: they are indeed sought after and consulted; but they are not really respected: we think, with reason, that their function should be sacred."

Bishop Burnet says, "A clergyman's friends and his garden ought to be his chief diversions; as his study and parish ought to be his chief employments."

† It afforded the editor great pleasure to find his name inserted frequently among these memoranda.

dates and times. And it is an amusement, and attended with some advantage, to take a transient survey of past occurrences. I will give you a specimen of the memorandums of the last month. "Feb. 5th, Mr. Y * * died, a friend of mine at W * * *. 9th, The day sister S* * * died; to be thankful for her piety and usefulness, and to pray for her family. 14th, My nephew B. S* * *'s birth day; to pray for him. 21st, Public fast. 23d, Mr. T * * * died, one of my former hearers. 24th, J. S * *'s birth-day; to pray for him. 25th. W. S * *, a relation of mine, died." This is the diary I keep.* Dr. Doddridge, as far as I can recollect (for I have not his diary by me), used particular marks for days well spent, ill spent, and indifferent. But a person may easily contrive any thing of that kind for himself.

Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies are excellent books, and will enrich your interleaved bible with many good interpretations. But his plan upon the Revelation is not, I think, the right one. He and Dr. Halifax, who lately published some discourses preached at Bishop Warburton's lecture, both implicitly follow Mr. Mede. When I was engaged in publishing Dr. Doddridge's Expositor on the Revelation, I studied that book as carefully as I could, and I found more consistency and satisfaction in Lowman on the Revelation, than any other commentator upon it.

Mr. Robinson, the author of the Plea for the Divinity of Christ, hath not received a regular education; but is a man of a surprising genius, and vast application. He doth not appear to me to understand the controversy about the Trinity; and has misapplied several texts, which I have taken the liberty of pointing out to him. He frequently contradicts himself, being in some parts of his performance a Sabellian, while in others he seems to favour the Athanasian doctrine. In reality, I take him to be a Sabellian, or else I do not understand him. I wish none would meddle with that controversy but those who understand it. I have read many treatises upon the subject, and some angry and uncharitable ones, whose authors did not understand it, but wrote without any clear ideas. I think Mr. Robinson's book will be useful, to show the difficulty of the point, and to abate the confidence and censoriousness of many.

The death of Dr. Adams's amiable nephew is, and will be, a great affliction to his good mother and uncle. He died of a violent fever at Oxford. I wrote a letter of condolence to the doctor on this very mournful occasion.

Your relations and friends here are well. I bless God I am as well as usual, but find old age gaining upon me by long strides. Continue your prayers for me, that I may be ready

* He had kept a more particular one: but what became of it is uncertain. Most probably he destroyed it; fearing lest it should have been made an imprudent use of after his death.

whenever the summons comes, and that all may be well at last. As a Scotch divine said in his dying moments, so I would say; "If I do not come up to Henry's glory, and Watts's glory, and Doddridge's glory, I shall be well, if I win in* among them."

Your affectionate friend, &c. JOB ORTON.

LETTER XXVI.

September 20, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—It is common for the lawyers, when they prefer a bill in chancery against a person, to crave leave of the chancellor to mend the bill. This I will endeavour to do with respect to my letter of yesterday; which I wrote in a hurry, as I was not willing to make the messenger wait.

I wish your friend Mr. * * may have an opportunity of reading a discourse, written by Dr. Wishart, principal of the college of Edinburgh, on the Inefficacy of a Death-Bed Repentance, or some such title, as it is an excellent piece; or, a sermon of Mr. Newman's (late minister of Carter-Lane, London) on the Case of the penitent Thief, which is a very judicious discourse. As to visiting condemned malefactors, it is very proper; for even a good man may be hurried into some capital crime; or repentance may begin immediately after the fact; at least, it is doing the best that can be done to alleviate future misery; and every thing should be tried, when eternity is near. There are some excellent reflections on such scenes in Archbishop Tillotson's two sermons on the Long-suffering of God, from Ecclesiastes viii. 11, particularly at the end of the first sermon. And I am much of his mind on this subject.†

* The expression of *winning in* is a Scotticism, and signifies to *get in*, or rather, to *gain in*, among them. We use the word for *winning a prize*. So in our translation, "that I may win Christ," κερδεσαι, *gain* Christ, as a treasure, or something extremely valuable, Phil. iii. 8.

† "The more I see of the world," says Mr. Orton, "the more I am convinced that no just idea can be formed of persons' characters, or future state, merely from the manner of their death; yet on these many lay great stress. Many would say, * * * made a good end; and some may die in raptures of joy and triumph; and yet make no better. Deep humility, repenting, and believing, are surer evidences than magnanimity or transport. You see how small and trifling a part of a minister's work it is to read the Visitation Office to the Sick. It is of importance to go further, and to inquire what their lives have been, of others, and of themselves,—what their views have been and are of themselves—of sin—their own guilt and danger—of Christ and the gospel—of the terms of acceptance—of eternity—whether they have kept up secret prayer, and how—what hopes of glory, and on what they are founded—and how they operate in languishing and dying circumstances? Yet you will find some, who through ignorance cannot, or stupidity will not, give proper answers to such questions. They will assent to what you say, but drop nothing as of themselves, by which you can judge of their state. This I have frequently and mournfully experienced in attending the sick and dying. This is the most difficult part of a minister's work; yet allowance must be made for a bad education, small advantages, being unaccustomed to say any thing on these subjects. It is perhaps better to err on the suspicious side."—LETTER TO A FRIEND.

I think I put into your hands, some time ago, Witherspoon's Essay on the Connexion between the Doctrine of Justification by the Imputed Righteousness of Christ and Holiness of Life, dedicated to Mr. Hervey. It was sent to me several years ago, by a gentleman of Glasgow, to whom I was a stranger. I think it an admirable book; and, though I do not altogether approve of its title, yet I am much pleased with his reasoning, as equally strong and conclusive upon our ideas of redemption. He is a Scotch divine, and author of the Ecclesiastical Characteristics.

Had you looked into the map of Oxfordshire, you would have found Tackley, the seat of the Dowager Lady Lichfield, where Dr. Stonhouse is lately gone. Let me advise you never to hear or read of a village, especially a market-town, without examining where it is. Thus much useful knowledge may be gained by degrees, and with little or no trouble. By taking this method, I have been of service to many tradesmen and others both at Shrewsbury and this town. I wish you through the hurries of the day at * * * *. Remember the story I told you of an old divine, who, being asked why he wore a long beard, answered, "I do it to remind me never to do any thing inconsistent with the gravity of my appearance."

On Thursday last, as I was sitting at dinner, I felt an earthquake; and heard a rumbling noise, like a wheelbarrow going over some rough ground. It happened at one o'clock, and lasted about two seconds. Many others in the town felt it, and some were much alarmed. I wish such alarms may do good. But we seem to be proof against every thing that is serious, kind, and awful.

I am now reading an excellent old book, written by Obadiah Sedgwick, who was a member of the assembly of divines, entitled The Anatomy of Secret and Presumptuous Sins, &c., which pleaseth me much. His heads and enlargements are short and comprehensive, and free from the unprofitable jargon of those days; and his language is excellent for the time he wrote in. If you meet with any of his works, it will be worth your while to purchase them, as they may be bought for a trifle. They contain excellent matter, and come home more to men's consciences and bosoms, than the writings of many of our modern divines.

I am sorry for the mournful occasion your letter speaks of. You tell me you knew the deceased from a child. Should you not in such circumstances seriously inquire, "Did I ever attempt to do her any good? Did I ever drop a hint of counsel, advice, and caution to her?" I love to ask myself such a question, when any of my neighbours and friends die. "Did I ever do them any harm, or speak evil of them? Had I ever an opportunity to do them good? Did I ever attempt it?" These are

useful inquiries. Remember these words: "And while I was busy here and there, behold he was gone,"—the person I should have taken care of. I did not expect you would be much improved or entertained by your visit to * * *. I fear the day was lost, which might more profitably have been spent in your studies and among your parishioners. Pray talk seriously to those of them who neglect totally, or frequently, public worship. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering, say I; and you know who said it before me to a young minister. My hint will, I hope, engage your attention and consideration; St. Paul's commands your reverence and obedience.—If you have not Mr. Addington's Treatise on Afflictions, Mrs. * * * will send it you in lieu of the book which her good mother intended for you; in which you will find many useful things, that may be serviceable to yourself, and to your sick friends whom you may visit.

I am but indifferent, and am often unfit for business or company, and my mental powers daily grow weaker. When I am disposed to be impatient, I think of two of my acquaintance, who are ground down with the stone, and labour after greater patience and thankfulness. But every disagreeable object appears formidable and dreadful to me, especially the near approach of death. I much need, value, and desire the prayers of my friends.

Yours sincerely,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. On Tuesday last was my birth-day, when I completed my sixty-first year. On that day thirteen years I preached my last sermon at Shrewsbury,* and have not been in a pulpit since; yet I hope I have been of some little use and significancy in life by my correspondence and publications.

LETTER XXVII.

January, 1779.

DEAR SIR,—Being confined to-day by great rain, I know not how to employ my time better than in writing a letter to you; though whether I shall be able to finish it to-day in time for the post I know not: however I will do something towards it. I am always glad to receive chit-chat letters, as they seem to come from the heart. Mr. Pope is I think right, who somewhere says, "The letters of friends are not worse for being fit for none

* From Eccles. vii. 2, on which he made this memorandum; "This was the last sermon I preached to my congregation at Shrewsbury." And which he concludes with the following anecdote:—"The celebrated Grotius, one of the most learned men the world ever knew, was, in his last illness, attended by a friend, who desired him, in his great wisdom and learning, to give him a short direction how to lead his life to the best advantage. To whom he only said, *Be serious.* This is my parting advice to you, as what comprehends every thing I have said,—BE SERIOUS."

else to read. The effusion of a moment ought to be the characteristic of all familiar writing. It is a strange recommendation, but a true one." In this view, I had rather write twenty letters to a friend with whom I can be free, than one to a person every way as good and valuable, and with whom I can be equally free, who is at the same time formal and accurate himself, and expects the letters of his correspondents to be so too. I do not love to write letters where compliments and apologies are necessary. Every thing that comes directly from the heart, and seems like conversation, is most agreeable to me. And indeed what is writing letters but a kind of conversation? and therefore ought to be easy, free, and unreserved. Perhaps I am selfish in this sentiment, as I can seldom write more than a few lines at a time without being tired and in pain, and forced to lie down upon my couch; so that method and order must be neglected by me; but these I think should be easily excused in letters, especially where the writer's heart and his esteem for his correspondent appear at first view, without any labour or study.*

I hope you have received the Bishop of Chester's (Dr. Porteus) letter,† which I returned to you some time ago; which is an exceeding good one, truly serious, full to the purpose, and adapted to do good. His lordship's two sermons, which were preached at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, are super-excellent. They were printed, as I have been informed, by the express command of the queen, in order to be given away among the courtiers.—Dr. Stonhouse sends me word that the bishop commended to him highly a sermon lately printed without a name, entitled A National Change in Morals and Politics, necessary to National Prosperity. The bishop is an excellent judge of sermons and I shall order it for our book society.

I am glad you have so tolerable a stock of sermons. But you will go on composing new ones, as thereby you will increase your theological knowledge; a new subject always strikes, and the natural love of novelty should be called in to the aid of religion. What hath a clergyman to do, but to give himself wholly to his work; increase his own and his hearers' acquaintance with the scriptures; and be continually drawing, from that inexhaustible fountain, streams of living water, for their enter-

* "The letters that pass between particular friends, if they are written as they ought to be, can scarce ever be fit to see the light. They should not consist of fulsome compliments, or tedious politics, or elaborate elegancies, or general fancies, but they should have a native clearness and shortness, a domestical plainness, and a peculiar kind of familiarity; which can only affect the humour of those to whom they were intended. The very same passages, which make writings of this nature delightful amongst friends, will lose all manner of taste when they come to be read by those that are indifferent. In such letters the souls of men should appear undressed; and in that negligent habit they may be fit to be seen by one or two in a chamber, but not to go abroad into the streets." —Dr. Sprat's Life of Cowley.

† A Letter to the inhabitants of Manchester, Macclesfield, and the adjacent parts, on occasion of the late earthquake in those places.

tainment and nourishment.* How few are there among us, who like Daniel Whiston, the professor's brother, left behind him several hundred sermons, which he had never preached. This is the other extreme. I will excuse your having a sermon to write on the Saturday, because the occasion of it was urgent and necessary; else I shall blame you if ever you have a sermon to make on a Saturday. Dr. Donne (as it is observed in his life) always chose his text, for the next Lord's day, on the preceding Sunday evening, when he had finished the duty of that day. This was *my* method. I always contrived to have Saturday as a kind of leisure day, to attend at the infirmary at Shrewsbury, or to do other business which (being market-day) it occasioned; and that I might, by exercise and relaxation, get myself into better spirits for the labours of the sabbath. Only on a Saturday evening I carefully reviewed my sermon, and committed the most striking parts of it, especially in the application, to memory. And I always spent my Saturday evenings at home, that I might prepare myself the better for the business of the following day.

I heartily wish you the return of many happy birth-days, December 14; and that each of them may afford you increasing pleasure in your own improvement, and the advancement of religion by your ministry. I have no doubt but you spent the day religiously; in thankfully acknowledging the goodness and mercy of God to you; in acts of humiliation for the vanity of childhood and youth; and in forming good resolutions for greater seriousness, diligence, and activity, as a Christian and a minister. May God hear your prayers, accept your praises, and multiply his blessings upon you!

I am now reading Michaelis's Introductory Lectures to the Sacred Books of the New Testament. It is a good concise account of critics, commentators, and their sentiments on the genuineness, authority, and inspiration of the books of the New Testament. It will refresh your memory with many things on those subjects; but he doth not enter deeply into the controversies of them.

I have lately bought a Scotch edition of Flavel's Works, in eight volumes octavo. The folio edition I had before; but this I can read as I lie on my couch, or as I sit in my chair, smoking my evening's pipe. I have read more of Flavel, since I was able to read at all, than any other writer; and though he is by no means judicious, yet there is an amazing tenderness and soft pathos in his style and manner; and I am always pleased with his plainness, simplicity, great seriousness, and entertaining stories.†

* Dr. Balguy, for the first four years after he had obtained a small preferment, did not intermit one week without writing a new sermon; and all his sermons were of his own composition.—Biograph. Britan.

† "Flavel. Not remarkably judicious, but plain, popular, tender; proper to address afflicted cases, and to melt the soul in love; his Token for Mourners inimitable;

I am concerned that Mr. * * doth not apply more diligently to his studies; and it really grieves me to see young divines, who have good natural abilities, and have enjoyed considerable advantages in their education, contented to glimmer; when with more application they might be burning and shining lights in the church, and the distinguished ornaments of Christianity and their profession. I sometimes talk freely to my younger brethren on such topics; but in this age young men do not in general choose to attend to the most friendly advice of their seniors; though delivered, not only tenderly, but respectfully. They are wiser, and have better ideas of divinity, especially, than those who have grown grey in study and in the ministry.

I think I have now written every thing I had to say to you —which has been done at many sittings—and I considered myself as talking with you. But this wet day makes me uncomfortable, and my letter is as dull as the day; yet fair or foul, bright or dull. I am, Your faithful and affectionate,

JOB ORTON.

P. S. Look over the next letter, with which you favour me; for the last was written in haste, and there were some words in it which I could not read. Let it be a rule with you, always to read over a letter before you seal it; correct whatever is wrong, make proper stops, that your correspondents may be at no loss to understand your meaning at once. This is one of Lord Chesterfield's advices to his son; and if he had given him no worse, it would have been well.

LETTER XXVIII.

March, 1779.

I ACKNOWLEDGE myself in your debt, dear sir, for two letters; which, on account of the indifferent state of my health, I am obliged to answer as I can, writing a few lines at a time, as I find myself disposed, without any regard to order or method.

I am sorry you meet with difficulties and discouragements in your present situation; but I am in doubt what to say concerning a removal to S * * *. I could wish you comfortably settled in a living of your own, where you would be more extensively useful; but am fearful you will find inconveniences in the place you think of; except you can fully resolve, and keep your

Fountain of Life useful; most of the subjects there proper to be preached over on sacrament days; allusion to pagan stories, both in him and Bates, very entertaining and useful."—DODDRIDGE.

"Bates. Charming eloquence: yet not formed style; sentences too short; words very polite; admirable similes, unless rather too thick; proper to be quoted by those whose genius does not lead them this way. Read his Harmony, Spiritual Perfection, and Four Last Things."—DODDRIDGE.

resolution, to mind your proper business, and to guard against the avocations of S * * *. I think a clergyman is most respectable, who keeps to his study and parish, and engages as little as may be in mixed company. He should be careful not to desecrate himself by letting himself down. Have you ever read Scougal's Works, author of that tract which Bishop Burnet published, called, The Life of God in the Soul of Man? If you have not, pray inquire after it, and read it diligently and repeatedly. Give me leave to send you the following passage from his Concio ad Clerum.—"Quotidiana clericorum cum laicis conversatio, contemptibiles eos reddit. Facile contemnitur clericus, si prandium invitatus sæpius veniat." You will think of these maxims, and let them have their proper influence with you. Scougal was an episcopal divine, and son of a Scotch bishop; a man of eminent learning and piety, and a good model for useful preaching; but died very young.* May God direct you in all your motions, and fix you there, where you may do him and his cause the most signal service! I know you will follow providence, and not outrun it; and I hope look to probable, though remote, consequences, before you determine upon so important a change in your situation.

I intend presenting Dr. Kennicott's bible to the school-library in Shrewsbury; to which I have already given some valuable books. Our friend Dr. Johnstone insists on my inserting in it the inclosed inscription; to which I have nothing to object, but its being rather pompous and full of self. But as the doctor has been at the trouble of drawing it up,† I believe I must be

* "Scougal. One of the first rank, though he wrote but little; remarkable for decent eloquence, suited to his subject: noble and proper thoughts run through every page of his writings; seems the best model of all his class; his Life of God, and Sermons, should be often read. He died at twenty-eight, and the world had an unspeakable loss in him."—DODDRIDGE, MS.

† Ut
In hoc municipio,
Dilecto natalium loco,
Quo
Proavi et parentes honeste et sancte vixêre;
Quo,
Cœtus dissentientium protestantium pastor constitutus,
Ministerio sacro
Annos XXVI. ipse functus est;
Ut
In his scholis,
Quibus et linguarum cognitionem
Studio decennali hausit,
Amoris et benevolentiæ
Pignus aliquod idoneum extaret;
Hoc opus eximium, honori S. S. S. dicatum,
Illustrissimi Ben. Kennicott, S. T. P.
Bibliothecæ donavit
Job Orton, S. T. P.
Et civis Salopiensis,
A. D. MDCCLXXXI.

obliged to insert it. I hear from Oxford, that Dr. Kennicott is much pleased with my intention.*

I am glad to hear from you so good an account of Dr. Adams, whom you have lately seen. There are few men I honour more for every amiable quality. If you return to college soon, I desire you to present my respectful and affectionate compliments to him; and be sure to do all you can to learn of the doctor steadiness, prudence, firmness, mingled with the utmost good nature, and readiness to serve others.† I have nothing to say about your academical studies and degree; but that I hope you will "purchase to yourself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. iii. 13), and be master of the best arts, that of saving souls.

I am going over Jortin's Sermons again, of which I am never weary; so plain, sensible, and judicious are they: though I sometimes suspect that some of the sermons were not his own, as they are so different from others of them, which correspond more exactly to his way of writing in his tracts and other publications.‡ But they are all worth reading again and again; and I am persuaded those which are most easy and familiar were his own, for that is an excellency in his style, and almost peculiar to himself. Such sermons want nothing but a little more practical and lively application to make them complete models for young divines. There is strong good sense and just reasoning in his discourses, generally couched under the plainest language. But he had, as I have been told, a very heavy delivery.

I shall be glad to hear from you, and hope for a continuance of your prayers, that as my day is, my strength may be. My head begins to fail, my tongue stammers, my hands tremble, and I am sinking apace to the dust; but my concern for my friends

* Dr. Kennicott had a great respect for Mr. Orton; and once told a friend, that he wished to pay him a visit in Shropshire, as, among other reasons, it would give him an opportunity of calling upon honest Job Orton in his way thither.

† In 1770 Mr. Orton wrote two pamphlets, in defence of Dr. Adams, in answer to a letter to the doctor by the author of Pietas Oxoniensis, entitled Diotrephes Admonished, and Diotrephes Re-admonished: in which the writer appears to have steered in a middle way between the doctor and his antagonists, respecting some theological differences and distinctions. The author of them hoped the controversy had done good, by exciting a spirit of inquiry into the contents of the gospel, and leading many to read and think on religious subjects, who otherwise would not probably have done it. And he had the pleasure of hearing that his tracts had been serviceable in this respect, especially in Shropshire, and that they were much valued by many respectable clergymen, particularly those of evangelical principles.

Another masterly pamphlet appeared in the same controversy, entitled, The Church of England vindicated from the rigid notions of Calvinism, written by one of Dr. Adams's intimate friends; whose name, were it to be made public, would do honour to the cause of learning and rational piety.[1]

‡ See the Gentleman's Magazine for Nov. 1784.

[1] The late Rev. Edward Blakeway, minister of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury.

and the interests of religion holds out still.* May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you! To that I heartily commend you in all your interests, and am, dear Sir,

Your faithful and affectionate,

JOB ORTON.

* "Work and write while you can. You see Time has shaken me by the hand; and Death is but a little behind him. My eyes and heart are now almost all I have left: and I thank God for them."—From a Letter of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, to his son the late celebrated John Wesley.

N. B. Here the editor finds it necessary to discontinue these Letters; as, soon after the date of the last, he came to live at Shrewsbury; and there are many things in Mr. Orton's future correspondence with him of a local and too delicate a nature to be laid before the public eye. This valuable man died July 19, 1783, in the sixty-sixth year of his age; and was buried, agreeably to his own request, in St. Chad's church, Shrewsbury. Sic mihi contingat vivere, sicque mori.

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST IS BLESSED, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE HAD IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE.

LETTERS

TO

DISSENTING MINISTERS,

AND TO

STUDENTS FOR THE MINISTRY,

FROM THE

REV. JOB ORTON.

TRANSCRIBED FROM HIS ORIGINAL SHORT-HAND,

WITH NOTES, EXPLANATORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL,

BY S. PALMER.

Ὅτι αἱ μεν επιστολαι φησι βαρειαι και ισχυραι.

2 Cor. x. 10.

PREFACE.

All who are acquainted with Mr. Orton's letters are agreed in opinion, that he excelled in this species of writing. They possess a peculiar degree of ease and familiarity, at the same time that they discover a sound judgment and great knowledge of mankind, as well as a lively sense of piety and a true spirit of Christian benevolence. His Letters to a Young Clergyman have been so well received,* and are so much adapted for usefulness, especially to all of the same respectable order, that I have long wished for a second collection of letters, from the same pen, more immediately suited to the situation and circumstances of his dissenting brethren; to whom, it might well be imagined, he was peculiarly qualified for giving instruction and admonition. Of this I had sufficient evidence in the letters with which he had favoured me, as well as in several written to other ministers or students, which had appeared in a periodical publication. As I presumed that some of my brethren, with whom he had corresponded, were in possession of letters from him equally valuable, I entertained the hope of being furnished with a number sufficient to make a respectable volume. On mentioning my design to some of his and my friends, I found it highly approved, and soon received a much larger number of original letters than I expected. Being at a loss which of them to suppress, and being also repeatedly told that I need not fear printing too many, I have made the collection double the size of what I at first intended.

It will be proper here to give the reader some account of the manner in which I have executed this undertaking. In a number of private letters it must be supposed there would be many things improper to be made public: what appeared to me such, I have suppressed. No other liberty is taken with respect to the composition, than that for correcting a few small inaccuracies occasioned by haste and inadverteney,

* "Every one applauds Orton's Letters. I have given away ten copies of them to different clergymen, and five to the laity."—Sir James Stonhouse, Letter 46.

which almost any reader would have corrected in like manner; or in transposing a very few passages for the sake of a better connexion.

It is probable some persons will think I have retained some things which ought to have been omitted, as being either uninteresting to the public, or too severe upon particular characters. As to the former, I wish it to be considered, that what may appear the least interesting to the majority of readers, may be highly so to some individuals, who are acquainted with the persons, circumstances, and places alluded to, though only initials are used; and that facts which are the most trivial in themselves have generally some useful hint of instruction founded upon them, or else are retained for the sake of a note. As to those censures which may appear uncandid, I have generally suppressed the names of the parties. Where the names appear, it is hoped nothing will be found but what is consistent with real esteem and perfect good-will, and what is also of a very useful tendency, for the caution and admonition of others; in which view perhaps few things in these letters may be improved to better purpose, than the writer's free and blunt remarks on what he thought reprehensible in some very worthy characters, whom he highly esteemed.

Dissenting ministers and students (as the title expresses) are particularly interested in these letters; which contain useful hints relating to every branch of ministerial duty, and almost to every situation in which they can be placed. A great part of them, however, may be read with pleasure and profit by persons of different descriptions. The members of our churches, while they read the duty of their ministers, may also learn their own; and when they see the misconduct of other professing Christians exposed, they may be effectually guarded against them. In short, the apostle's character of "scripture given by the inspiration of God," may in a good degree be applied to these epistles, as being "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

If any of the worthy clergy of the establishment, to whom Mr. Orton's former letters were so acceptable, should look into these, they will find many things in them equally deserving their attention; and it is hoped the candid and moderate will meet with nothing to give them offence. It is true, that here, more than in any other of his writings, Mr. Orton appears the strict dissenter; as, considering the persons to whom he wrote, it might naturally be expected he would. But he will not, I trust, appear the bigoted, uncharitable dissenter, while he discovers his attachment to the principles which obliged him to dissent. Though some free remarks now and then occur relating to the church, and to things reprehensible in some of her ministers, here is nothing inconsistent with that

liberality which he always professed, or with the highest respect for all conscientious, pious, and exemplary clergymen. And they will find that he is much more severe in his censures of many things among the dissenters and in the conduct of their ministers.

None who are acquainted with Mr. Orton's manner of writing letters, and the circumstances in which he often wrote, will expect here to meet with elaborate disquisitions on subjects of literature or theology, or great brilliancy of sentiment or expression on any topic. Every thing of this kind he frequently disclaimed. In addressing his friends he wrote with the greatest ease and freedom on the subjects which their letters to him or any recent occurrences suggested, without a very nice regard to method or expression, considering himself, and wishing them to consider him as "talking to them," in the manner he would have done in his parlour. This circumstance, as it is a sufficient apology for any little inaccuracies which may be observed in his letters, gives them an additional value.

In the disposing of them, as they are addressed to various correspondents, it seemed most natural to class those together which were written to the same persons. But this is attended with one great inconvenience in respect to chronological order, as later facts frequently occur prior to those of earlier date, and the same circumstances are referred to in different letters which are placed at a distance from each other. To remedy this, I have subjoined a Table, showing the dates of the letters, by which those who choose it may read them in the order in which they were written.

The notes are all added by the editor; many of which contain a brief account of persons whose names are introduced, and others give an explanation, or further illustration, of such circumstances as seemed to need either. In a few instances I have taken the liberty to express my dissent from my correspondent, but would not have it inferred from thence that I am perfectly agreed with him in every thing else, though in all things I pay great deference to his judgment.

S. P.

Hackney, Feb. 4th, 1806.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

IN WHICH THE LETTERS WERE WRITTEN.

A. D.		No.
1752—1762.	. . . . .	1—10
1762.	January 10	48
	March 10	11
	April 16	12
	December 26	13
1763.	. . . . .	49
1765.	August 10	53
1769.	September 12 . . .	14
	December 2	15
1771.	February 2	54
	——— 20	55
	April 22	16
	August 19	56
	October 10	17
1772.	February 24 . . .	57
	March 18	37
	April 10	38
	——— 13	18
	September 7	39
1773.	January 27	19
	April 26	58
	August	73
	November 3	40
	December 3	59
1774.	February 23	20
	May 2	21
	August 27	41
	November 11	42
1775.	March 23	22
	——— 29	23
	June 27	60
	July 12	61

A. D.		No.
1775.	August 31	62
	September 6	63
	——— 23	64
	——— 29	65
	December 21	66
	April 24	43
	——— 29	50
	September —	44
1777.	February 15	24
	March 27	67
	May 3	25
	June 11	26
	July 18	68
	September 16	69
	——— 29	70
	November 3	27
	December 17	45
1778.	January —	71
	February 3	28
	April 11	46
	—— 13	72
	June 18	29
	———	51
1779.	January 1	30
	May 24	31
1780.	February 2	32
	March 20	47
	September 13 . . .	33
	November 21	52
1781.	June 1	34
	September 24	35
1782.	March 30	36

LETTERS TO DISSENTING MINISTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

TO THE REV. MR. ASHWORTH, DAVENTRY.

Salop, Nov. 13, 1752.

DEAR SIR,—When I consider the great and important work on which you are entering,* and all the fatigue and trouble that will necessarily attend it, both to yourself and Mrs. Ashworth, I am in a little doubt whether I should congratulate or condole with you. But I must, upon the whole, congratulate you, when I recollect what a wide sphere of usefulness you are moving in, and what great and lasting service you are capable of doing for the church of Christ, by a faithful discharge of the duties of this new relation into which providence has brought you. And when I consider that health, spirit, and resolution which God has given you, to go through the work, I cannot but look upon it as a token for good, that he will strengthen you in what lies before you, and honour you as an instrument of doing eminent service for the church and kingdom of his dear Son.

It is by no means a proper season to suggest to you any thing of the difficulties of the work: you are sufficiently apprised of them. But it will be your wisdom to expect discouragements (even in those instances in which you may expect comfort) and prepare for them. The recollection of the uncommon abilities,

* That of resident and divinity tutor in the academy, which, on the death of Dr. Doddridge, was removed to Daventry, where Mr. Caleb Ashworth was previously fixed as minister, and whom the doctor had recommended to be his successor. He was a man of strong powers and great prudence, but had so great a veneration for Mr. Orton's judgment, who had been assistant to the doctor, that upon undertaking the office of tutor, he applied to him for some hints of advice, in order to the proper discharge of it; and they who had the happiness to be under his tuition will recollect with pleasure how exactly he, in most instances, followed the wise maxims which this letter contains. Some particulars in it, however, were thought too minute and personal to be laid before the public. What is retained may be of use to tutors of dissenting academies, and will be gratifying to many other ministers, who knew Mr. Orton, as affording additional proof of his judgment, and his zeal to promote the best interests of the dissenters. Of Dr. Ashworth, and of his works, some account was given in a discourse preached and published on occasion of his death, July 18, 1775, when he was but 53 years of age. The Rev. Mr. Belsham has done himself honour by the testimony which he has lately borne to the worth of his tutor, notwithstanding his deviation from the sentiments inculcated by him, and his zeal in defending a contrary system, in his discourse on the death of Dr. Priestley.

application, and worth of your predecessor, is undoubtedly filling you with anxiety. But "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." And the same grace that carried him through all his labours and difficulties will be sufficient for you, if you continue to maintain an humble sense of yourself, and a diligent application to the throne of grace for assistance and success.

It would be very unbecoming in me to presume to direct your conduct in this important station. But as you desire my thoughts upon the management of your academy, I shall suggest what occurs to my mind upon the subject. And my general advice shall be— to walk as you had the good doctor for an example; except in some instances where he, amidst the multiplicity of his affairs, did not pay so great an attention to some smaller things, as a regard to the welfare of his family and the credit of the academy should have led him to do. Some of these I will plainly point out to you.*

His unhappy inclination to publish so much was an evident injury, as you may know by one single instance, his almost entirely neglecting to compose sermons, and his preaching extempore;† which was very improper before a number of divinity students. The error from which this arose you are, I believe, in no danger of falling into. The next and most fatal neglect in him was, not keeping up his own authority, and that of his assistant, for want of keeping close to those laws and rules which he laid down. This was attended with one consequence that affected him more than it ought to have done; I mean, my leaving his family, which I should not have done for any other situation, had he not put on me the burden of supporting the laws, and maintaining the regularity of the family.

The rules for such a society should be formed with great prudence, and a care to avoid the extremes of rigour and lenity. But when they are established, they must be resolutely observed; which is in short the great secret of managing such a family in an honourable and comfortable manner.

I hope you will meet with due honour and respect from the pupils that came to you from Northampton. I have said what I can to engage them to it; but I sometimes fear they may be deficient in this, considering [what has been said by certain persons] intimate with them, who while they thought themselves wise, showed themselves great fools. If you perceive any thing of this kind, don't see it. Steady perseverance in good schemes

* As it was not inconsistent with the high respect ue to the doctor's character thus freely to mention a few small blemishes in it, so neither is it to publish them for the caution of others. Let those who have no greater faults, and half his excellencies, make the most invidious use of them they please.

† The doctor usually wrote all the heads of his sermons, with hints of the leading thoughts.

without noticing little slights, if they should appear, will conquer prejudices and create esteem.

You are too sensible of Mr. Clark's worth, and importance to you, to neglect any thing to secure his authority and esteem in the family. Treat your pupils with the affection of a father, but be careful at the same time to avoid a familiarity which may breed contempt, or in any measure lessen that reverence which they ought to have, and I hope will have for you. The manner in which you set out at first, you are sensible, is a matter of the first importance to your usefulness and comfort. An error now will be for ever entailed upon the academy.

I hope I need not caution you against that error of the good doctor, in saying fine things to and of almost every body.* A disposition to compliment more than ordinary is very bad in any, especially in ministers and tutors, because (low as the regard to them is sunk) what in others would be esteemed words of course are in them generally esteemed words of truth and soberness. When you have occasion to write to the friends or relations of your pupils, it may be your wisdom not to express your good opinion of them in too strong terms. There may be foibles in their character, and instances of great imprudence in their behaviour, well known in the family and in the town (and you know there were some such, as the doctor was unacquainted with) which their friends when they come home [may easily perceive]. An honest plainness, attended with a strict regard to truth and justice, will render your account of them credited, and will be most agreeable to their wisest friends.

It was a great evil in the doctor's family (though, considering his numerous engagements, perhaps most convenient to himself) to throw all the business of the day so late. I am certain you will find it best for yourself and your own family to keep early hours for every thing. I would advise you to have family prayers in the morning at eight, and breakfast immediately after. If there be any interval between, it is almost always mispent. Begin lectures as soon as you can after breakfast. Dine at one.† Contrive to sup immediately after evening prayer. Endeavour to get all your family to bed betimes. Late hours are bad for every body, especially for your wife; and neither your servants nor your pupils will rise in a morning so early as they should, if they sup as late as at Northampton. A caution on this head is particularly necessary to be attended to on Saturday evening.

See that your servants all attend family worship, and come in at the beginning; except one be necessary to be in the kitchen,

* This foible in the doctor is no secret, but has often been mentioned to his disadvantage. It arose however, as some others did, from an amiable principle; and though not to be vindicated, is certainly less censurable than the opposite temper, which leads many to say injurious things of almost every body.

† The reasons here given for so early an hour are partly local, and would not be generally satisfactory. A long morning has some advantages.

and let them take it in their turn. If you can have convenience for kneeling in prayer, it will be best, as that posture is most decent, and will prevent gazing about. Before you begin worship in the evening,* inquire who is to pray, and resolutely prevent all debates on that head. Let there be no alterations of the order unless the affair be settled in time.

I have often thought it a great error that the doctor made family prayer so long. When he expounded in the morning,† it was seldom less than an hour, which is quite too much. It wearies the attention and spoils all the pleasure of devotion. Let the prayer itself be short and comprehensive, grounded on what you have been reading, if you find your thoughts flow freely; but do not force them. The neglect of this hint, when the good doctor was not very well, or a little hurried, made some of his performances dull and disagreeable.

Pecuniary penalties are very proper. But of late years they answered no end, because the students never paid them, but they were put down to their account, which was no punishment to them. Insist upon their paying every week. And for the second or third offence oblige them to some public exercise, which will be a much heavier punishment; especially to those that have money at command. Dissertations upon difficult texts of scripture, and analyses, will be useful [as stated and frequent] exercises for the senior pupils, and they who neglect to have them ready at the proper time should [be subject to a penalty.]

Great care will be necessary to form your pupils to a proper way of speaking. Urge Mr. Clark to proceed with his care upon this head, and insist upon their attending and practising according to his directions. Labour to break them of ill tones at first. Be particularly cautious about their prayers, to teach them to pray. Direct them to proper methods to attain the gift and grace. Especially warn them against metaphysical and philosophical prayers. But let not your animadversions be severe, as the good doctor's often were when he thought they were not evangelical, which intimidated and discouraged many of his pupils. Errors that will naturally mend by years and experience should be gently treated.

Begin at the first to accustom your pupils to come early to meeting, for your sake, for their own, and as examples to others. See also that they attend weekly lectures when you have any; and if you can, bring them to pray in the meeting on particular occasions. Let them keep up a repetition on Lord's day night in the meeting-house; two of them praying and one repeating,‡ or reading such a [printed] sermon as you

* When the students used to pray in rotation.

† Singing also made part of the worship both morning and evening.

‡ Viz. a sermon preached in the day, taken down in short-hand, or delivered by himself.

shall appoint. I would have you see beforehand what they intend to deliver, lest they commence preachers before the time; for I must beseech you not to encourage them to begin to preach too soon. This was the ruin of several of the doctor's pupils, some of whom began to preach before they had studied divinity. He used to plead the necessities of the churches; which, though a pitiable circumstance, was not a sufficient reason.

It appears to me a matter of great importance, that you should pay no bills for your pupils to persons in the town, nor let them have any money without a particular commission from their parents or friends. This will prevent much extravagance.

While you are endeavouring, by the faithful discharge of your office, to serve the interest of religion, forget not that of your own family. In order to this, guard against every thing superfluous. I really think the students lived too well at Northampton. I apprehend it ought to be your maxim (as it was of Dr. Benion's* widow, who kept the academy here) to make the pupils maintain the family, or very near it, i. e. to spend no more in housekeeping than the students pay for their board. This is certainly reasonable; but here you know our good tutor failed. If the friends of any of the pupils come to see them, I know of no obligation you are under to accommodate them at your house. Be sparing therefore in your invitations. If you judge it proper that any of them should dine or sup with you, let them take up with the common provision of the family-table. This will save money and time, and give them a better opinion of you than if you were to make particular provision for them, as the doctor (I must say weakly) used to do.

Flesh suppers will be bad for you and yours, and therefore I warn you against them, knowing, by sad experience, their evil consequences. If you have parlour boarders (as I hope you will not), let their parents know they must expect to live plainly as you do; and let them be content with humble ale, which was all we had in the first year I was a parlour boarder at Northampton, till luxury and late hours were introduced amongst us.

You will have necessary business enough on your hands, and therefore be careful not to multiply correspondents. Write as few letters and as short as you can. The doctor's correspondence was enough for any person without any other business. I should not wish you the acquaintance of lords and archbishops. Drop some correspondents as soon as you can, and

* Dr. Benion succeeded Mr. John Owen, as tutor in the academy at Shrewsbury, but died in less than two years, A. D. 1708, at the age of 35, when his widow, as is supposed, continued to board the students. See the life of this eminent man in the works of Mr. Matthew Henry.

write only tradesmen's letters to others. Business—and your servant—that is enough.

You will, no doubt, review your lecture before you deliver it, and probably make hints of what you intend to say upon it.* This, and labouring after correctness in your sermons, will recommend you to the esteem of your pupils, and make you, what a tutor ought to be, a pattern to them. I have nothing more to add, but to desire you to be free, and not be kept under bondage to any. I hope you will never be the slave of any persons, either Independents or Presbyterians, orthodox or otherwise. Set out upon a generous plan and be steady. Thus alone can your academy flourish.

Let Mrs. Ashworth know how highly I esteem her, and how much I am concerned for her amidst the fatiguing work on which she has entered. I am daily mindful of you both, that God would give you strength and spirits, wisdom and resolution, in proportion to every labour and difficulty to which you may be called; and make both of you comfortable and happy in every relation in which you stand to each other and those about you. As a token of respect I have sent you two Cheshire cheeses, and hope they will be acceptable. As cheese is extremely dear with us, I presume it is so with you. I have paid the carriage.

My affectionate service to Mr. Clark and all the gentlemen. I shall long to see them in their new abode; and hope, if God spare me till next summer, to have the pleasure of an interview with you and them. If I did not know you so well, I should think it proper to make many apologies for the freedom I have used in this address. But I know you will impute it (and I can assure you very justly) to the sincere esteem and respect with which I am, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

brother, and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

P.S. I must beg the favour of Mr. Clark to transcribe for me Dr. Doddridge's Lecture on Lowman's Scheme of the Revelation; as I believe it must be printed to make up the deficiency in the notes on that book.†

* It was the practice of the tutor in this academy, not merely to read the lecture previously composed (of which the pupils had a copy before them), but to deliver a free exposition of it.

† Viz. in the Family Expositor, the last volume of which Mr. Orton was at this time preparing for the press, according to the author's request. See his advertisement prefixed to this volume, dated Nov. 21, 1775.

LETTER II.

TO THE REV. MR. CLARK,* AT THE ACADEMY IN DAVENTRY.

Salop, Dec. 22, 1752.

DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for the copy of the lecture concerning Lowman on the Revelation. I must give you some further trouble about the Expositor, which is, to consult Vitringa's Observations, where he observes, "that there was an officer in the synagogue who had the name of angel," to illustrate Rev. i. 20, ii. 1, &c. The doctor, in his MS. note about the dragon in the Revelation, mentions one in the Royal Society's repository — feet long. Have you any book in the library out of which you can supply that blank?† He refers to Middleton's Antiquities for a curious hieroglyphic, which he proposed to give an account of in a note, to illustrate the four beasts, Rev. iv. 6, but has not done it. Please to examine that book and send me an extract. This is all I have to trouble you about at present. I am glad to hear of the prosperity of the academy, and would daily pray for its continuance; and, as one considerable means of that, for your continuance in it.

As to what you desire about "extemporary prayer," knowing your friendship and candour, I shall send you a copy of my letter to the Lancashire ministers,‡ where you will see my

* Mr. Samuel Clark was descended from a race of eminent nonconformists. His father, Dr. S. Clark, was minister at St. Alban's. Dr. Doddridge, who was early patronized by him, preached his funeral sermon, in which a high character of him may be seen. This, his eldest son, who was early inclined to the ministry, had his academical education at Northampton, where he made such progress in literature, and acquired such a character for piety and prudence, as to secure the highest esteem of Dr. Doddridge; who, as soon as he had finished his studies, took him to be his assistant in his academy. Upon the doctor's decease he continued in the same office under Mr. Ashworth, when the academy was removed to Daventry, where the editor of these letters well recollects the great veneration and respect with which he was treated, both by his colleague and all the students. After spending about five years in this situation he chose to settle as a minister, and was invited to a congregation at Birmingham, A. D. 1757, where he was universally respected and beloved, and had the prospect of great and lasting usefulness. But by a mysterious providence the hopes of his friends were suddenly blasted. As he was riding one Lord's day morning to preach at Oldbury (which place he supplied alternately with his colleague, Mr. Howell), his horse, taking fright before he had got out of the town, threw him on the stones, and after languishing, insensible, three days, he expired, in the 42d year of his age, Dec. 6, 1769. Dr. Ashworth preached his funeral sermon, which (with Mr. Howell's address at the grave) was published. It contains the warmest expressions of friendship, as well as a pleasing account of his character, both as a Christian and a minister; which well corresponded with the advice given him in the following letters. Upon his death these letters appear to have been returned to Mr. Orton, and lent by him to some of his younger brethren, from the mention which he makes of them to one of his correspondents; and, at the time of Mr. Orton's decease, they were in the possession of Mr. Wells, of Bromsgrove, who took them with him to America, from whence they were lately transmitted by him to the editor, with a view to publication. Mr. Clark published a sermon at Daventry on the earthquake at Lisbon, and Mr. Rose inserted one or two of his discourses in "The Protestant System."

† The length is about twenty-three feet. See the doctor's note on Rev. xii. 3, as thus completed.

‡ Who were at this time about to introduce a liturgy into their congregations.

maturest thoughts upon that subject; to leave room for which I must add no more, but that I am,

With the greatest sincerity and esteem,

Your very affectionate friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

TO THE REV. MR. SEDDON, MANCHESTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—When I had the pleasure of seeing you last, you earnestly desired my thoughts upon the question now under consideration by the brethren in your neighbourhood, concerning the use of free prayer and forms in public worship. I am loath to refuse so esteemed a friend his desire, though I am conscious how unfit I am to propose any thing upon such a subject to you or the brethren, whose abilities are so much superior to my own, and who have longer and more carefully studied the question. But your candour and theirs encourage me to believe you will judge favourably of my sentiments, and reckon me truly concerned for the advancement of pure religion, and the honour and success of your ministerial labours, though in this instance I should differ from you.

I am sensible of the difficulties attending free prayer, and heartily desirous of every improvement our public worship is capable of, and a closer union among protestant dissenters. But, after the most impartial inquiry I can make, I must declare myself for the continuance of free prayer, and apprehend that exchanging it for forms would be greatly injurious. The reasons which have chiefly swayed with me are these that follow.

The first set are taken from some general principles which seem to me well founded.

1. The chief end of prayer is to improve our own spirits, by cherishing a sense of the divine presence, and our dependence upon God; exciting and maintaining reverence and love towards him, and promoting benevolent affections to our fellow-creatures. This end is most likely to be answered when the thoughts are fixed, and the affections warmly engaged; which I apprehend is most effectually done by free prayer. I find it so in myself; and I have heard the same remark from a multitude of more experienced Christians. Nor does it seem to me probable that there should be the same life and fervour in the use of forms as free prayer; and I think that in the present day too little stress is laid upon fervency in devotion.

2. The arguments urged by the defenders of nonconformity in behalf of free prayer have never been answered to my satisfaction.

3. It has been reckoned (I think justly) the honour of dis-

senting ministers that they can use free prayer, which the established clergy cannot or will not, in cases where the rubric does not restrain them.

4. The promise of the assistance of the Spirit (especially Rom. viii. 26), seems to include his assisting us in matter and manner; and his help may be peculiarly expected in public worship, Matt. xviii. 20.

5. The difficulties attending free prayer will be greatly lessened, if due pains were taken to prepare the heart for the work by greater fervency in private devotion; labouring to be filled with exalted conceptions of God and his service, when we set ourselves to address him in the public assembly. "Out of the abundance of such a heart the mouth will speak," with propriety, fervour, and usefulness. I am confirmed in this opinion by having heard many private Christians of common abilities pouring forth a judicious and devout rapture, and I have found, by conversing with them, that they took this method. "The heart," in this instance, "teacheth the mouth, and addeth learning to the lips," Prov. xvi. 23.

Secondly. Some reasons taken from a regard to the credit and usefulness of ministers, influence my judgment in this instance.

1. I apprehend the use of stated forms will lessen a minister's esteem among the people. They will be ready to imagine he wants the spirit of devotion, and that his heart is unaffected. Though this may be the sentiment of some weaker Christians only, yet they are not to be despised. Some of them are most eminent for real virtue: and so much reputation, so much usefulness.

2. The use of forms will be likely to lead men into a dry, cold, abstract way of praying,* less intelligible, devout, and useful, though more exact, methodical, and judicious. And there may perhaps be peculiar danger of this in the present day, considering the fashion of preaching.

3. It may probably have a bad influence on a minister's general temper, and lessen his ready utterance on spiritual things.

4. It will be likely to render a minister less fit for prayer on particular occasions, such as the circumstances of families, especially in affliction. Bishop Patrick was in early life eminent for a devotional spirit. But taking a distaste [at some practices] of the nonconformists, he lost that spirit. In the advance of life, visiting an old friend, a dissenter, he was desired to pray in the family. His performance was so different from what it had formerly been, that imagining the family must observe it, he said, when he rose from his knees, "I profess it's out of my head." The master replied, "Oh, sir, I fear it's out of your

* This is chiefly applicable to a minister's own precomposed prayers: a treatise on which was published in 1767, entitled Free and Candid Disquisitions relating to the Dissenters, where this objection is noticed.

heart; you have made a sad exchange for your lawn sleeves and mitre."

Thirdly. There are some reasons which weigh with me, taken from the disposition of the dissenters, and the state of the public.

1. The dissenters in general are most inclined to free prayer, and the pleasure and advantage of it is to them a great reason for nonconformity. If some congregations admit forms, the question will be, whether they do it from a persuasion of their expediency and usefulness, or only because they would not oppose or forsake a minister for whom they have a great respect. The character of persons is also to be considered. If they are pleased or content with forms, who appear, in other respects, cold and indifferent in religion (which I fear is the case of many of our hearers), and at the same time those that are the most serious, devout, humble, and holy, should prefer the old way (which perhaps upon a careful inquiry will be found to be the case), their judgment, I think, ought to have great weight in determining the point. That I might go upon some ground in this opinion, I have made the inquiry in my own society, and others where I am intimate, and find that the most serious and exemplary Christians are for free prayer. Those that are lukewarm, though in general sober and virtuous, seem willing to admit forms, or rather are indifferent about the matter; which in an affair of such importance is a bad symptom, as to their real character, and a discouragement from attempting to introduce them. (N.B. I have good reason to believe this is the case in Lancashire, though I did not care to say so.)

2. I apprehend the stated use of forms will prevent the rising generation from desiring and labouring to obtain the gift of prayer, and thereby prevent their maintaining family worship, and occasion the entire loss of social meetings for religious discourse and prayer, which appear to me to have the most favourable aspect on the revival of religion. There are few ministers in the present day but encourage the use of forms in families, where the head cannot do without; so that there appears to me little force in the objection against free prayer in public, as "leading persons to decline the use of forms in their families, and so neglect family worship."

3. The use of forms will be likely to lead lukewarm dissenters to church; and the serious and fervent to follow lay-preachers and methodists, and so our churches will be depopulated. (N.B. This is actually the case with one meeting in Lancashire.)

4. As it is not likely the dissenting ministers in general, or even those of one county or district, should join in the use of forms, it may occasion a difference in their affections, and where there is not a very candid spirit, may produce mutual reproaches, and create divisions, already too numerous among dissenting churches.

5. The introduction of forms among the dissenters will, I humbly apprehend, be an obstacle rather than a help to "the further reformation of the church of England," if a desire to introduce the dissenters should be a part of the scheme. As they would not be unanimous in the use of forms, their disagreement would be an objection against alterations in their favour. It would be said, Some of them are come in without alteration, and the other will submit to no liturgy. I remember it was urged in the house of commons against repealing the test-act, that the dissenters were not agreed; that the wiser part complied with it, as at Nottingham and Coventry, &c., and the rest were a humorous people, whom it was not worth while to make concessions to please. And this argument, it is said, had great weight with many of the members, in determining them against the repeal. Nor do I see (if an attempt to reform the church should fail) that any of the members of it would be likely to join the dissenting churches where forms might be used; since, as far as I am acquainted, there appears no inclination in those who most disapprove the liturgy and constitution of the church, to establish separate societies, or join with the dissenters.

These, sir, are my chief reasons for not approving the proposed change. You desired me to give my sentiments with the greatest freedom, and I have done it, and the rather because I apprehended this is an affair of the greatest consequence. I freely own to you, I fear the introduction of forms among us will be greatly injurious to the dissenting interest as such, which is the cause of truth and liberty, and to which it is probably owing that the established church is not in a worse state, with regard to the character and abilities of the clergy, and their discharge of their functions; and that it will sink religion among us yet lower than it is, and quite drive away the Spirit of God. When I consider things in this light, in which they appear to me, after the most close and impartial inquiry I am capable of making, I own my heart trembles for the ark of God. And I hope my fathers and brethren, in your parts, will continue to proceed with the utmost caution in this weighty affair; examine closely into the principle on which they propose an alteration, and into the sentiments of the more serious and spiritual part of their hearers; and set apart some days of solemn prayer, to seek divine direction. And I hope and believe the Spirit of God will so assist them in the work of such a day, and so delight and edify the hearts of those that attend, as may possibly at once supersede all further deliberation on the question.

If I have expressed myself too strongly on this subject, or without manifesting that esteem and respect for you and my worthy brethren which I really feel, I entreat their candour and forgiveness. May God guide you in all your deliberations, and

lead you to approve and pursue such schemes as shall be most for his glory, and the support, credit, and edification of our churches, and make you the happy instruments of training up many souls for heaven! I am, &c.

[P.S. TO MR. CLARK.]

I should observe to you, that the enclosed letter was written in a hurry. But I thought it my duty to write freely and plainly in an affair which I think of great importance. That you may enter into the meaning of some parts of it, I must inform you that I have it from very good hands, that the more serious and laborious part of the ministers in Lancashire are very much against the alteration proposed; that it is chiefly set on foot by the younger sort; that some dissenters of the greatest substance are averse to it, and the more religious part of the common people especially are much grieved at it; that one minister who uses forms has lost all his congregation, and been obliged to remove, they being gone to the methodists; and that another, most eager for the scheme, has since conformed, which has strengthened the objections they made who were steady dissenters.

And now, though I have tired myself with this long letter, I must add a few words about your queries. The chief difficulty attending extemporary, or rather free prayer, arises from two things: one, too great a desire to be very accurate; the other, want of taking sufficient pains to keep up the life of religion in our souls. In the former case there may be extremes; but I think it is an error to suppose that every thing should be as exact and methodical as in a sermon or precomposed prayer. I see no reason for this. Give me leave to tell you a little story. My grandfather once solicited a very excellent but very modest minister to pray in his family, when there were several others present, who supped with him. He desired to be excused, alleging, "he had not thought of it, and there were so many other ministers present." My grandfather replied in his familiar way: "Sir, you are to speak to your Master and not to them; and my bible tells me he is not so critical and censorious as men are." The great thing, as I hinted in my letter (but did not care to be more explicit, lest they should call my candour in question), is to set about the work with becoming seriousness and solemnity of spirit; which will fill the mind with proper thoughts and expressions, and raise it above that "fear of man" which, in this instance, "bringeth a snare," and occasions the uneasiness of mind which many feel, and which prevents their doing so well as they otherwise would.

Some previous thought may be proper as to the general drift. A general plan laid down in the mind may be useful to regulate the thoughts, and promote a proper regard to the several parts of prayer. As to myself (I speak it to a friend), I have for many years left off this method, which I used myself to at first, because I found it cramped my thoughts, and, while I was recollecting my plan or leading ideas, distracted my mind. I now never think of any thing I have to say before I go into the pulpit, except on some particular occasions. This may perhaps be wrong. But what inclines me to it is this: that I almost always find my thoughts flow most freely, and words occur most easily, when I have never thought before, but only endeavoured to get my mind into a good frame, and kept my thoughts as much as possible upon some general topics; e. g. the presence of God; the solemnity of worship; the concerns of sinful immortal creatures; the love of Christ; the scheme of the gospel; the gracious plan of redemption; the sublime system of morality; the promises of the Spirit's assistance; death and eternity, &c. Having laboured this point, I generally fix [in the afternoon] upon something in the morning sermon, or the chapter read, or the psalm sung; which leads my thoughts into a train more easy and natural than when I had laid my scheme or plan before. This also occasions variety in prayer, and prevents a frequent repetition of the same things.

I have talked this matter over a great many times with one of the devoutest as well as wisest men I know,—Dr. Scott;* who tells me he approves the method, takes the same course in his private devotions, and has several times hinted to me, with great friendship and candour, several reflections like those I have suggested to you. By this method devotion may be kept up in a minister's own heart while he is leading that of others; for "as face answers to face," &c., and if he be warmly impressed, his people will be likely to be so too. But it is almost impossible to prevent, now and then, some impropriety of speech, or repetition of thoughts. Whenever I am sensible of that, I choose to go on rather than correct a single word, because that disturbs the mind, and engages the hearer's attention to what he might not otherwise have observed. The devout worshipper will not heed a little inaccuracy, and others a minister should very little regard. I generally choose to dwell and expatiate on those parts of prayer for which my own mind is then particularly disposed, reducing others to a little compass; which, though not so methodical, is more edifying.

But I have said enough on this subject: you need no advice I can give you as to the performance of this service. And you have less need to make objections against extemporary prayer

* Dr. Daniel Scott, author of a translation of St. Matthew, &c., and brother to the late Mr. Thomas Scott, of Ipswich.

than most ministers I know. I pray God to improve your gifts and graces, and "pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication." I write freely to you on this head, as it is only for your own perusal. My service to all the gentlemen, and hearty good wishes for the prosperity of their studies.

I am yours, affectionately.

LETTER III.

TO THE REV. MR. CLARK, AT THE ACADEMY, DAVENTRY.

Feb. 12, 1753.

DEAR SIR,—The account you give me of the hieroglyphics in Middleton fully answers my purpose. It seems to be the very thing the doctor referred to, as it explains the nature of the ancient hieroglyphics, and shows how beautifully the capacities and dispositions of the angels are represented by the four living creatures in the Revelation.

I am glad my letter about prayer gave you any pleasure. I am confirmed in the propriety of the general sentiments [on revolving] them over again in my own mind, and conversing on the subject with serious Christians, and particularly by the specimen of a New Liturgy, designed for the Use of a Dissenting Congregation, &c., which I have just been reading; especially by the author's uncharitable remark, p. 10, charging all his congregation that disliked the innovation with bigotry, &c., yet I now add (what I should have mentioned before) that my arguments were rather intended to prevent the ministers in [Lancashire] forming and agreeing in [the use of] one liturgy, than against the mere use of forms.

The reasons you urge in favour of them have indeed great weight, and if a minister were to draw up his own forms, and deliver them without reading, many of my objections would cease. But I think this way would seldom be natural and easy, especially if his style was stiff, and his sentences long. He would be ready to study accuracy too much, and leave little room for what is striking and pathetic. I believe many ministers over-polish their sermons, and those composures are generally the most intelligible, easy, and striking, that are written the quickest, provided the person has made himself master of the chief thoughts he would introduce.

I agree with you, "that our long prayers are often little more than forms; and that properly blending five or six forms would answer all the desires of those who are most zealous for free prayer." But this will in a great measure obviate your objections arising from the state in which a minister's own spirits

may be, and that fear of man which it is difficult to get over. The latter will lessen, if not entirely cease, when he is settled with a congregation of a candid and serious spirit.

I allow that "the assistance of the Spirit may be expected in the drawing up of forms," but I must still think that the promise chiefly relates to the assisting ministers as to the frame of their spirits in public worship. And in this view, I think it quite wrong for a minister, especially a stated minister, who knows the temper and circumstances of his people, to confine himself entirely to his notes [in preaching], to suppress a just and striking thought that arises in his mind, or to neglect pursuing it, if he sees that it seems to make an impression upon his hearers. But the case between praying and preaching seems widely different. In preaching you are generally confined to one subject, in which it is extremely hard, if not impossible, for a person to talk for an hour or half an hour together, with propriety, except he has a large fund of knowledge and a ready utterance. But considering the variety of subjects that must and ought to occur in prayer, a person of moderate abilities may, by the method I before mentioned, be able to touch upon each of them with propriety. This may be illustrated by what Dr. Birch observes in his Life of Archbishop Tillotson: that he could pray extempore excellently well, but was once quite nonplussed, and obliged in a few minutes to desist, when he attempted to preach without notes, upon the most common and comprehensive subject, viz. a future judgment, and on a text on which he has five or six sermons in his works.

I shall have no objection against [a minister's using his own] forms, if they are natural and easy, if there be a proper variety and they are delivered as the genuine dictates of the heart at the time. In this view the people will not object to them. But the use of a liturgy is a different thing. Many of their prejudices on this head may be and are unreasonable. The question then will be, whether these prejudices of theirs should be complied with (as they will be found to be the prejudices of the more serious, and sometimes the more sensible part of our hearers), and so the dissenting interest be supported; or resolutely opposed, and the interest ruined, and the reputation and usefulness of ministers lost? For I am ready to believe, all that can be said will never reconcile the minds of the generality to the use of stinted forms of worship.

The grand objection against free prayer is that which the author above mentioned has stated with great force: viz. "that the people are apt to look upon it as the minister's business to pray, and not a part of worship in which they are concerned." But doth not this arise, in part, from ministers themselves using such phrases in their prayers as [countenance this idea]; and may it not be prevented by always considering themselves

as the mouth of the people, using no expressions but what they may and ought to adopt; and by sometimes warning them against such an error, and endeavouring to give them just notions of social prayer, and the nature of joining in it, in the manner that devout man, Mr. Bennett, has done, in the second part of his Christian Oratory? But perhaps the same inconvenience (besides many other evils) would be found in the use of forms, and even actually are, if I may judge by what I sometimes see at church, where the people seem to have no regard at all to what the minister reads, except to make their own responses.

I have heard very few dissenting ministers (except one or two in Northamptonshire, who ought to have been excluded the ministry), who on account of their "hesitations, strange confessions of sin," &c., have given me pain and disgust. The author I have already mentioned seems to insinuate that this a common case among the dissenters. But I think he is mistaken. I have often been much more disgusted at the blunders the clergy have made in reading prayers, and the little appearance of a heart affected with them. Now I am upon this subject, I will tell you what I observed the other day in attending a funeral, as an instance what little impression forms make upon them that constantly use them. The minister of the parish is the most serious devout clergyman we have in these parts; and I presume, from the largeness of the parish, that he reads the burial service about [a hundred] times every year, and has done so for about forty years; yet this worthy man could not, or would not, repeat the two last collects without book; the candles which were held by him at the grave being almost blown out, he hesitated and blundered till I was quite in pain for him. If forms so frequently repeated seem to run in at the eye and out at the tongue, without impressing the memory, I think they are not likely to affect the heart.

As to the query you annex, about "the means of obtaining ease and fluency" [in prayer], a great deal depends upon a person's natural style and readiness of speech. To such as have studied mathematics and the more abstruse parts of ethics very closely, and spent much time in thinking, reading, and disputing about nice and abstract subjects, it is extremely difficult to gain an easy, ready way of speaking [on devotional topics]. The most desirable style for prayer and preaching is a scriptural one, which has a great many advantages above any other, especially in this, that the same expressions frequently occurring do not tire the mind as our own phrases would do.* A scriptural style is to be acquired by reading the bible, especially the psalms, in a devotional view, praying it over in secret, and reading such authors whose style is scriptural, Flavel, Grove, Watts, Bennett,

* And the language of scripture being familiar to the people, they can more easily join in the use of it.

Doddridge, and (who in this view is *instar omnium*) Henry; though he has carried the matter rather to an extreme; endeavouring to lay up such expressions in the mind as appear proper for prayer, in their true sense, rather than as allusions. Mr. Henry's Method of Prayer should be a vade mecum with students.

When I read Henry's Exposition, or the Family Expositor, as I daily do in my family, I endeavour to express the sentiments proper for prayer, in those scriptural phrases I have been reading, and so to increase my stock of them. In the book of Job and the prophecies of Isaiah there are the sublimest, and at the same time the plainest, ideas and phrases relating to the divine excellencies and the works of creation and providence. In the psalms, the best helps for thanksgiving, confession, and prayer for pardon. In the New Testament, and especially in the Epistles, are such views of Christian virtue, the blessings of the gospel, and the nature of the future state, as, if familiar to the mind, will be justly and properly introduced under the other parts of prayer.

After all, every man has his proper gift. But I think this may be attained in a tolerable degree by the means now recommended. Perhaps also it may be of service, when you meet with a devotional phrase that is striking and affecting, to use it in secret in every prayer, till it is fixed in your mind. A collection made of expressions upon various subjects, and occasions, and frequently read over, would be a great help. This method I took when I first came to the academy, and found it of service. I shall only add, that "every good gift is from above," and "Lord, teach us to pray," is a petition never unseasonable.

Upon reviewing what I have written, I am ashamed of many things in it, especially that I have appeared so much to advise; which, as Lord Halifax observes, "is a sign that a man wants advice." If you think so, give it me freely. I fear nothing from your reproaches, and hope much from your sentiments. As to inaccuracies, tautologies, &c., with which my letter abounds, I have no other apology to make, but that it is very bad weather; has snowed all the time I have been writing; that I am a mere weather-glass, rise and fall with the mercury, am servile to every skyey influence and the sport of every paltry atom. But in all weathers and circumstances, this I am very clear in, and I hope you will believe it, that I am with true esteem and respect,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and servant.

LETTER IV.

TO THE REV. MR. CLARK, AT ST. ALBANS.

Salop, March 22, 1757.

Dear Sir,—Yours of the 16th I received this morning, and though I have nothing to say worth troubling you with a letter about, yet I cannot refrain sending you a line to condole with you on the death of your good mother, for whom, on account of the little I have seen of her, and the great deal I have heard of her, from those who intimately knew her, I had a high veneration. Her removal must be a great affliction to her children, who seem, from both parents, to have imbibed a great deal of that natural tenderness and affection which is a good foundation of filial duty and respect, especially when recommended and strengthened by the principles of the gospel. But considering her tedious and painful afflictions, her removal is rather to be congratulated, especially by those who knew her piety, and cannot but have the most delightful assurance of her being advanced to distinguished felicity and glory, after having passed through such tribulation with the temper of a Christian. I heartily pray that God may assist you, and the rest of her children, to emulate the piety and zeal of your excellent parents, and to fill up their places in the world and the church in an equally useful and honourable manner. It is a great honour to descend from such parents. The brighter the pattern is, the greater care is necessary in copying it. But the same grace which carried them through their difficulties and sorrows, and made their lives so valuable and exemplary, will be sufficient for their children, if they persist, as I am persuaded they will, in following their steps.

You are now, dear sir, to consider yourself as the father of the family, and I make no doubt but you will care for them with all the wisdom and tenderness of a parent (γνησιως) according to that most beautiful and emphatical expression of the apostle concerning his son Timothy, Phil. ii. 20. But I have no need to counsel you, or suggest any proper thoughts and consolations to your mind on this afflictive occasion.

It gave me great pleasure to hear of your answer to the people at Birmingham. I had lately an opportunity of seeing a minister from that neighbourhood, who gave me a very agreeable and encouraging account of the disposition of the people towards you, which he had learnt from some days' residence among them. I have also had a letter from Mr. Wilkinson,* whose sentiments I had a mind to see, and therefore wrote to him. He expresses great pleasure in the thought of your coming

* Mr. Clark's predecessor.

to succeed him, and represents the people as, to a man, unanimous for you, and thinks your situation will be very comfortable. Mr. Howell* seems disposed to fall in with this measure, and I believe will be very friendly with you.

I would not have you discouraged by the little seriousness you perceive among the people. I fear there is too much reason for such complaints in all our great towns. I found it very much the case when I came hither; and indeed it was the most discouraging circumstance in my settlement. But when I had been here some time I found most of the older people had a great deal of the true spirit of piety; that some of those who had been brought up under the ministry of my predecessor, who was an indolent man, had the power of religion, though they never had been put upon any thing that might discover it, either by zeal for the interest of religion, or religious conversation. But the greater part of those between thirty and forty were content with a form of godliness. I cannot say that I see any great alteration in them for the better, nor indeed did I much expect it. I therefore concluded that the chief thing I had to do, in order to promote religion here, was to bend my labours chiefly towards forming the rising generation. And I bless God, in many instances I have seen the good effects of this; and some of the descendants of ignorant parents, who seemed to have no sense of religion, are now very serious, and behave like true Christians in their own families.

I really think the chief question a minister should ask concerning any congregation proposed to him is, Whether there is room to be useful, and any good ground to work upon? If persons are not tinctured with bigotry and narrow notions, or sunk into open vice and profaneness, there is some hope of them. But the chief hope arises from the youth. You will find work enough for all your strength, application, and ability among them, and I verily believe your pains among them will be abundantly rewarded. I do also believe you will find some among the elder people, who remember the state of the church twenty or thirty years ago, and what their ministers then did, who will be ready to strengthen your hands. I pray God to direct your way among them and to gratify your warmest desires of usefulness.

Please to present my affectionate and sympathizing respects to those of your family that are at present with you, and my compliments and good wishes to Mr. Hirons.† Many of my friends rejoice to hear you are likely to settle so near them. That it may be a sphere of eminent and long continued usefulness to you, is the sincere wish and prayer of, Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend and brother.

* The other minister of the same congregation, who in his funeral oration expresses the warmest affection.

† The worthy minister who succeeded Dr. Clark, at St. Albans, and who is still living.

LETTER V.

TO THE REV. MR. CLARK, AT BIRMINGHAM.

Salop, August 22, 1757.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad to hear that you have got safe and comfortably settled at Birmingham. I hope you will more and more like your situation. You cannot expect that persons who are employed in trade, and especially in manufactories, should find much time for reading, or know much of books. If you can find them disposed to receive knowledge from you, and to attend to hints of instruction that you will be ready to give them, it is very well. It is as much as you can expect in almost any dissenting congregation, and more than many of your brethren find in theirs. You must endeavour to come down to them, and while you think with the wise, talk with the vulgar. This I imagine will be some difficulty to you, after having been so long engaged in abstruse studies, and conversing chiefly with professed students. But it is a necessary piece of condescension, and of honouring all men.

I apprehend nothing is more needful for you, when composing your discourses, than to consider yourself as talking to some plain honest people, to whom you would be solicitous to say nothing above their capacities, and yet nothing mean and injudicious. I never heard you preach but I thought you were sufficiently intelligible to your auditory in general; but if you could get into a more plain and familiar way, it would perhaps be more acceptable and useful. And into this way I think you would be likely to get by conversing with common people, by observing how they express their own ideas, and how what you say in conversation seems to impress them. I apprehend this is equally necessary at Birmingham as at Oldbury;* for the farmers and nailers there have probably as much understanding as the manufacturers at Birmingham. And if you were to take the same liberty there as you do at Oldbury, it would render you more acceptable to the generality of your hearers. You are the best judge how you can go on readily and without hesitation or long pauses, when you do not use your notes. If you can do this, it is great pity you should confine yourself to them.

I think it will be worth your while, and indeed a part of your duty, to form an acquaintance with the people at Oldbury, who have been hitherto much neglected in that respect. If you could contrive once a fortnight, or month, to spend a day among them, besides the sabbath, and get Mr. T., or some one else who

* A neighbouring village, at which the two ministers alternately preached. The congregation there has since had a minister of its own.

knows the congregation, to introduce you to them, your condescension would be highly pleasing to them; they would receive you as an angel of God; and after such visits your public labours would be more agreeable and likely to be more useful. As it is impossible that Mr. H., considering the engagements of his school, should be much among them, he cannot think it an encroachment on his province.

I should be very glad to hear that you undertake catechizing, and wish it might be done at Oldbury too, if it be not too much for you to do it on the Lord's day, as it cannot be done there any other time. It will be so acceptable to the people, that they will consider it as a mark of peculiar regard for them, and so be more disposed to desire your continuance with them, and do all they can to make it comfortable. I see no harm in this.

I wish your mind was quite easy about the affair of baptism. Though perhaps you may never be fully satisfied upon this head, yet (as is the case of many ministers) you may think the arguments in favour of the practice preponderate, so as to justify the administering it to infants. Some of the superstitions mentioned by the primitive writers undoubtedly began very early. But as far as I recollect what I have read upon the subject of the antiquity of infant baptism, those that mention it express it in stronger terms than the other rites, and some of them speak of it as a practice derived from the apostles; whereas they never mention the other ceremonies in that view. I am in the general well pleased with Mr. Hallett's piece, excepting what he says of the effects of baptism. I remember to have read Killingworth's some years ago, and also another piece that he wrote containing remarks on the several answerers of "Christianity not founded on Argument," with relation to what they say upon baptism. He is a very tedious and a trifling writer: I could never see much in his arguments. Stennet [sen.] I think not worth your reading. I have the whole controversy between Flemming and Burroughs, bound up together, and if I can meet with an opportunity I will send it you. There are some good things in Flemming, but you know he is no great critic, nor much acquainted with antiquity.

I own it is a considerable prejudice against infant baptism that it has been abused to very superstitious purposes, and am of Mr. Baxter's mind, "that if infant baptism were better improved it would be less disputed." But among the members of the established church, and I fear among many dissenters, the Lord's supper has occasioned as much superstition, and been almost of as little effect in proportion to its more extensive design. I think every minister should always be careful, whenever he administers baptism, to instruct men plainly in its design, and caution them against its abuse, or the neglect of those duties which they thereby lay themselves under obligations to perform.

And if ministers represent the ordinance in this light (which I think the true one), as a solemn dedication of their children to God through Jesus Christ, according to the encouragement of the gospel, and an obligation laid upon the parents to instruct them in the principles and duties of Christianity, I think it will be of great service to the church. And I do not doubt but many parents, who do not say so much to their children as they ought on this head, may yet be excited and quickened by it to the discharge of their duty to their children, which is a matter of great importance. And indeed I apprehend that the chief service which baptism is of to children, besides the prayers that attend it, is the effect which it is adapted to have on the minds of their parents, to promote their faithful care in educating them, and so the benefit redounds to the children.

It is a difficult matter to say in what light children can be called upon to consider and attend to it. It is hard to convince them that they are thereby laid under obligations, any further than that, being entered into the church and kingdom of Christ, they have a peculiar title and claim to spiritual and eternal blessings, if they are faithful in discharging the general engagements of a Christian profession.

I shall hope to see you here before winter. I cannot think of so long a journey as to Birmingham, especially as I was abroad above a month in my last visit there. I am glad you are with Mr. Lucas.* He is a wise and good man, and a true friend. We always called him "Brother Lucas" at the academy, on account of his friendly disposition. My respects to him. Mr. Blythe is a very good-tempered man, and will be a very agreeable acquaintance. I know less of Mr. Hawkes,† but he is a sensible man, and will be very friendly with you. I heartily wish you the continuance of your health, (by the way, Birmingham is a smoky town, and you must often make excursions into the country to breathe a little purer air,) much comfort in your settlement, and much success in all your labours.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

TO THE REV. MR. CLARK, AT BIRMINGHAM.

Salop, Jun. 30, 1758.

DEAR SIR,—I imagined that when you came to Birmingham, you would find reason to regret that there are so few of your

* Mr. Samuel Lucas was brought up to the ministry, but his health not permitting his continuance in it, he went into trade. He was great uncle to Mr. S. Lucas, of Morley.

† They were ministers of the other congregation, to which Dr. Priestley afterwards preached.

people who seem disposed to concur in and keep up edifying conversation. And indeed where could you have gone but you would have found too much of the same disinclination? I think ministers that come to a congregation where their predecessors were not sufficiently solicitous about spreading a serious spirit and encouraging religious discourse, come to a great disadvantage. And where people have not been used to it in early life, it is seldom that they are willing to begin it afterwards, though they may be really serious. I have found reason to make the same remark as you do, with regard to the disposition of the women on this head. But I imagine the best method to remedy this evil is, to be free and familiar with the rising generation, and encourage them to open their minds without reserve.

Though a minister labours under a difficulty of knowing the state of his flock, and so of adjusting his discourses in the pulpit to their circumstances, yet there is so great a correspondence between the workings of the mind in different persons, that he may in general come near the mark, by studying the make, dispositions, and views of some particular persons. In this case it will also be of advantage to get such intelligence from their neighbours and acquaintance (with whom perhaps they will be more free) as we can with prudence inquire after. The fewer persons we can find who will be free and open about their religious experience, the more care should be taken to keep up our acquaintance with the practical writers of the last age, who had many advantages for knowing the workings of the mind in religious concerns, superior to what we have, both because their people were more communicative, and the difficulties of the times kept them more alert and lively in religion. Such a person as he you mention at Oldbury will be of great service to you, and a great blessing to the church, if he be, as I presume he is, a man of prudence, and will not be assuming. And as you begin to take more notice of the young people, and more pains about them, than has formerly been taken, you will find, I hope, some other elderly people of that society, who will concur with you, and strengthen your hands, not only by a greater care of their own families, but by admonishing and encouraging their neighbours.

I think nothing has done more to sink our interest as dissenters, and contributed to the decline of religion in our societies, than that our people take so little notice of those that come occasionally among us, and bestow so little pains to encourage such as appear serious and hopeful. Nay they will not so much as inform their minister of such particulars as would give him an opportunity of [attending properly to them]. Hence serious impressions are often lost, and persons that would be steady and worthy dissenters, are tempted to join the methodists, who are ever ready to encourage others to attend their meetings.

I am sorry that any of the people at Oldbury have behaved in the scandalous manner you mention. It is too common in all places, and a great many persons that profess religion have not only made light of it, but some of them have set themselves gravely to defend it. These irregularities are owing to the great liberty children and young people are allowed, and the want of greater care and strictness in their parents. In the last age, persons grown up were treated as children; now children are treated as men and women, and left to their full liberty. I have had two such melancholy instances in my own congregation, and was obliged to separate both parties from our communion.

I am glad your society of young men is likely to go on well. You will find it difficult to know how far they understand and improve by what they hear and read. I think the method you take of putting books into their hands, and asking their opinion of them, will be of great service in this view. We have a book-society here, in which many of our people are concerned, and this gives me an opportunity of diverting trifling discourse, and introducing something useful to improve their minds, by asking whether they have had any society books lately, and what they were; what they thought of them; whether they remembered such a passage, or such a story. About these they will sometimes be free, and so the way is open for some profitable conversation.

Your remark on the usefulness of a minister's attending the young men's society is very just, especially where they have not been catechized. Most of our society have been my catechumens for several years, and having taught them both Watts's catechisms, and lectured to them on my edition of Bourn's catechism in public, they I hope have less need of instruction in the leading doctrines and duties of religion. And as among our society there are some persons about thirty years of age, who are of considerable attainments in knowledge and Christian experience, they are better able to instruct the younger, and seem disposed to do it. I should be glad sometimes to attend their meetings, but they are obliged to have them on a Lord's day evening, as several of them are apprentices and servants, who cannot be spared on a week day; and I am generally so fatigued with public service, and my house is so far from the chapel, that I cannot, consistently with my health, attend them. Had I the sole care of the congregation I could put some things on a better footing in this and other respects. But Mr. Fownes's* views and mine, though in the main the same, yet in some instances differ, which is a restraint upon me. He has never been

* Mr. Joseph Fownes was co-pastor with Mr. Orton. He was a respectable learned man, but remarkably stiff and precise in his manner. He published a masterly piece on Toleration.

used to these sort of associations, and therefore proceeds perhaps with too much caution.

I have read Norris on Religious Conversation, but have forgotten what is in it. Henry's Sermon on Friendly Visits is a good, serious discourse, but there is not much in it for your purpose. I have often observed and lamented the difficulty you mention, to distinguish between the complaisance of people in giving you the hearing, saying as you say, and expressing their own real sentiments. I have in many instances tried various methods to make them talk themselves, but have not been able to prevail. This has sometimes led me seriously to consider whether I ought not, as a Christian minister, with all the prudence and tenderness possible, to ask them such questions as would, in a manner, oblige them to give such answers as might give me light into their real characters. Does not a physician ask very particularly about the case of his patient, his various symptoms, feelings, diet, the manner in which his medicines operate, &c.? And the more particular he is in his inquiries, the more his patients like him. It shows the greater concern for their recovery, and is of great advantage to himself in prescribing. And does there not appear equal reason for the physician of the mind to be as particular? If we were so, I imagine our people would at least think we acted in character, and showed a true concern for their welfare. Were we tenderly to ask them such questions [as would lead to a discovery of their knowledge and spiritual estate] could it reasonably give offence? Would it not be greatly serviceable to our people and to ourselves? Perhaps we should find that, to many of them, no conversation would be more welcome. Perhaps they are secretly wishing we would begin it, and we should have the unspeakable pleasure to find more religion among them than we apprehended. I know this was the way of some of the most acceptable and useful ministers in these parts, especially Mr. Baxter, and I wish you would read, if you have never done it, his Gildas Salvianus.* When I have been able to conquer my aversion to make such close inquiries, as alas (to my shame I write it) I have seldom done, I have found it acceptable and useful. Suppose such inquiries were introduced, with some strong expressions of our concern for their salvation and happiness, and a deep conviction that it is our duty to watch over the souls of our people, and "teach privately from house to house," nothing would so well pave the way and open their hearts [and lips]. This I refer to your consideration, and I wish you would make the trial among some of your plain people at Oldbury.

* Or Reformed Pastor; designed to recommend pastoral visiting, an abridgment of which was published by the editor of these letters, with Mr. Orton's approbation.

I am glad to hear you have had some agreeable and useful interviews with your brethren in the town. Be not afraid to stir them up; they all need it. I believe Mr. Wild* is a good man, and he is reckoned good tempered. It would be very desirable if all the ministers in Birmingham could meet once a week or fortnight, to consider of the most proper methods to revive religion, and would conclude such a meeting with prayer. I know they used (all but Mr. Wild) to meet once a week at each others' houses, but I fear it answered no good end; their conversation was not so edifying as it might have been. * * * You comfort me with the hope of seeing you in the spring. In the mean time I wish you continued health, ability, and success,

And am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Salop, Nov. 9, 1758.

Dear Sir,—I thank you for the particulars of your ordination. I am glad you had such a numerous appearance, and that the services of the day were conducted so much to the satisfaction of the auditory. I hope God will hear the prayers that were then offered, and shower down his blessing upon pastor and people. I have heard a great deal of Mr. Grigg's† acceptance in your neighbourhood. Surely there must be something extraordinary in him that should so take with the people.

I am glad that you are setting out with the purpose of catechizing. I suppose you may have donations [of books] from Coward's fund, but then you must comply with all their [rather *his*] rules, particularly in teaching the Assembly's Catechism. This I would not do, and therefore my application was unsuccessful.

You will find no difficulty in ranging your classes, when you have once tried the capacities and observed the application of the children. When I catechized on a week-day, I asked them the questions in Dr. Watts's catechisms; the little ones in the first, the older in the second; then broke each question into particulars, of which I wrote some hints in the margin of my book, endeavouring to make them as plain and easy as possible; by which I could discover how far the children understood what they learnt, and what needed further explication. When I had gone through that work I used to ask them the

* Minister of the Independent meeting.

† The Rev. Joseph Grigg, who lived at St. Albans, but had no pastoral charge. He frequently assisted his brethren, and was uncommonly popular wherever he preached, being possessed of a lively imagination, and a most natural, easy, and striking delivery. He had an intimate friendship with Mr. Clark, of which there is a lively memorial in some lines addressed to him on parting, printed in Mrs. Harrison's Miscellanies, which book contains a number of his other pieces, in prose and verse.

texts, and what they could remember of the sermons preached the Lord's day before, and urged their parents to take pains to teach them. This I thought very serviceable to the children, as it put them upon hearing attentively, and endeavouring to remember something; and it gave me an opportunity of talking it over with them freely. It was also serviceable to me, as I hereby observed with what particulars children were most impressed; and I always found it was with some short sentences that were striking and familiar. I concluded the service with a short prayer, which I suited, as well as I could, to the circumstances and capacities of the children.

As an encouragement to them that learnt and said well, I used to give them little books, as Dr. Doddridge's Verses, Watts's Songs, Harrison's Dialogues, &c. This was pretty expensive, though they came the cheaper as I bought them by the dozen. As you will have many more children than I ever had, the prudence of doing any thing of this kind must be left to yourself; I will only say, it is money well laid out, as it tends to conciliate the affections of parents and children.

I think your design of having the Lord's Supper oftener is quite proper. As your number of communicants I suppose is large, distributing the elements by other hands may be advisable. But I chose to carry them myself, because it gave me an opportunity of dropping some particular hints to persons according to their respective circumstances, especially to those that I knew to be in affliction.

The case of Mr. —— will open to you one of the greatest difficulties in your pastoral office, i. e. conversing and praying with sick persons. The best directions I know you have in your Lectures; but I find it extremely difficult to reduce them to practice. In the case of those who are evidently pious, or evidently vicious, there is no difficulty; but where persons are sober and honest, yet seem to have little or nothing of the life of religion, there is the greatest difficulty not to excite false hopes or groundless fears. I have generally thought it the safest way to remind them of the many instances in which persons deceive themselves, and to suggest to them that religion lies chiefly in the "hidden man of the heart;" in what passes between God and their own souls; in what care they take in governing their thoughts, &c. Both in discourse and in prayer I endeavour to express myself with the greatest solemnity concerning the infinite mischief of being deceived in a matter of such vast importance; exhorting them to search and try themselves, though their conduct has been ever so regular, and to renew the exercises of repentance and faith, as at such a season highly proper and necessary. The persons that are often present at our [visits to the sick], generally render this work still more difficult.

Our chief danger in the present age seems to be, in erring on the side of candour and complaisance, and not dealing with mankind with sufficient plainness and fidelity. Many of my people have died, with whom my conscience has afterwards accused me of not dealing so plainly as I should. I wish you divine direction, assistance, and success, in this weighty affair.

I have just been reading Turner's Compendium of Social Religion, and am very much pleased with it. I saw a good account of it in the Monthly Review, which made me send for it. I never heard of the author, but suppose he is a dissenting minister at Abingdon.* I think he has given the best account of the nature and constitution of Christian churches that I have any where seen; and has admirably shown of what advantage Christian communion would be, if its duties were properly attended to. I doubt not you will receive some benefit from the reading of it in the discharge of your pastoral office. I fear you will find your church in a very disorderly state. It will be proper for you to procure a list of your communicants. I think it is a great pity that our ministers do not more frequently inculcate upon their people the duties they owe to one another, in their relation as members of the same church. The fear of having or doing any thing like the Independents, has led most ministers and churches that are called presbyterian into an almost entire disregard to the plainest rules of the New Testament.

I am glad to hear your young men's society goes on well. I see not the least objection against your having any youth from the other congregation. We have one who is a member of the established church and attends regularly. Our young men have without my knowledge (but I entirely approve their scheme) got a few hopeful boys, between twelve and sixteen, that attend their meeting, and seem well pleased with it. I hope it will do them good, and dispose them for the same exercises when they grow older.

There is one thing I forgot to mention, relating to the study of the scriptures, which is, that after you have finished the reading and studying a chapter in a critical view, it would be useful to you to consider what practical reflections and inferences may be drawn from it, and make memorandums in your interleaved bible, of such as arise from the general design and connexion. You will find the advantage of this when you come to expound. Mr. Henry has many judicious and striking remarks. I find no commentator of so much use in this view; and I know Mr.

* Mr. Daniel Turner was many years minister of the Baptist congregation at Abingdon, Berkshire, and died in the year 1798, at the age of 89. He was a man of considerable learning and abilities, of an excellent character, and of an amiable catholic spirit. He published several pieces, which were well received, particularly Letters to a young Gentleman going abroad, and Short Meditations on Texts of Scriptures. He left some MSS. containing his last thoughts on certain points of doctrine, to the editor of these letters, who had long maintained an agreeable correspondence with him.

Bourn made great use of him. The error of most expositors is explaining plain things, and darkening what every body understands, by attempting to throw light upon it. There is nothing more that I wish for in your public capacity, than a style and method of address a little more free and familiar.

After the freedom you have encouraged me to use upon these subjects, I shall make no apology for such hints as these. I pretend to no superior judgment above what my having been longer employed in these exercises gives me. But it is time to release you.

I am yours, very affectionately.

LETTER VIII.

Salop, Jan. 1, 1760.

Dear Sir,—I have yours by Mr. H. and am glad to hear of your continued health by him, as also of your continued diligence in your work, and your increasing respect among your people and acquaintance, by the young men who have been some time here, one of whom will convey this to your hands. It always gives me great pleasure when I hear young people bearing testimony to a minister's worth, and expressing a proper gratitude for his pains. It shows that his labours with them are not in vain.

[I am glad to find that you] intend to begin expounding [scripture], as I esteem it a most important and useful part of public [service, which may be performed in such] a manner as to render it at once entertaining and edifying. I have been engaged in the work many years, and have gone as far as Proverbs. I chose to begin with the Old Testament, because I thought it would be in [some measure] new, and because I had not then settled my sentiments on some points of divinity, which I could not help introducing had I begun with the New Testament. Another reason was, that Mr. Boult, who was then my colleague, began to expound the New Testament at the same time. I generally took a whole chapter, except it was remarkably full of matter and of difficulties, and then I divided it. I used to read over the whole chapter, and then explain it verse by verse; but I have since altered my method, and now content myself in reading the chapter, with interweaving a kind of paraphrase, for the illustration of it where needful; and where any difficult text occurs, explaining it by the way. This shortens the service and saves me some breath, of which I am obliged to be very sparing. Were I to go over the historical books again I would take this method. When I think any text is sufficiently plain, I never say any thing upon it. And when I have gone over the chapter I conclude with a few reflections from it, grounded as much as

possible upon the general design, and not upon particular texts, except there be something very striking and instructive in them. When in the course of my exposition I meet with any considerable difficulty, or what deserves a fuller illustration than what could be given in the time allotted to this service, I choose to make a sermon of it, v. g. Abraham's offering up his son; the prophecy of Ishmael—of Shiloh; God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, and the like. I omitted all the ceremonial law, except the Jewish feasts, and those institutions that throw light upon the New Testament, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews. When I was called to conduct both the services, I only expounded in the morning, and found it full as acceptable to the people as if I had given them a sermon. Mr. Bourn used to expound both morning and afternoon. But then his sermons were not long, especially his morning sermon, which was indeed rather too short, being little more than an introduction, and explanation of the text and context, of which you have a specimen in his printed discourses.

But care should be taken not to occupy so much time in expounding or preaching as to leave the people room to imagine that prayer is but a small part of public worship, and not of so much importance as public instruction.

I wish our usual method of worship was altered: that our long prayer was divided into three; one containing petition, another thanksgiving, and a third intercession, and that reading some devotional parts of scripture and singing intervened. Were I capable of conducting the whole service of the Lord's day, I would take this method, and then only expound in a morning and preach in an afternoon. I really think such a method of worship would be much more subservient to answer the ends of it than our present.

It will be very desirable that you should engage your people to bring their bibles with them, which will be a great help to their understanding the chapter as you go over it.

You will find in Bishop Hall's Contemplations, and in Mr. Henry, a great many remarks which will be very entertaining to an auditory, and make them come with pleasure to hear your exposition, as the chief danger is making it dry.

Mr. Fownes occasionally expounds, and very agreeably: but is apt to pass over particular phrases, which the generality of people do not understand, which is prevented by the paraphrastic method above mentioned, of which you have a good specimen in your great-grandfather's Annotations.

I have not heard what success the Family Expositor meets with in the world.* We have about forty subscribers in this neighbourhood, and several of the clergy. Nor do I know how

* This must refer to the 4th edition published in weekly numbers with cuts, in the year 1760.

[the new edition of] Dr. Guyse's work succeeds. I take it in myself, because I sometimes find some help from him in making a scheme of a sermon, as his paraphrase is very full, and he makes, as it were, a scheme upon every text. But his Recollections are extremely dull, heavy, and unaffecting. Yet there are many people who prefer his to Dr. Doddridge's. In my opinion there is no comparison between them.

The thanksgiving day was observed here with great decency and propriety. We had no rejoicings of any kind but religious ones. Not a bell stirred, nor a bonfire blazed. Our churches were well filled, and as there was no service in them in the afternoon, we had a very large auditory. My mother returns your respectful compliments. She is well, considering her age, and I am much as usual.

I am, &c.

P.S. Since I wrote the above, I have been reading a charge delivered at an ordination by Mr. Rastrick, who says, "Begin betimes to expound the scriptures publicly. You cannot easily imagine the advantage this will be to yourself, if to nobody else; it will engage you to study them. And let your sermons be scriptural. The words of God are those that must reach the heart and do the work."

LETTER IX.

Salop, Feb. 19, 1760.

Dear Sir,—I am greatly obliged to you for your tender sympathy and seasonable consolation, under the heavy affliction which it has pleased the Almighty to bring upon me and my fellow sufferers.* The affliction has lain with the less weight upon my mind, as I have been expecting it ever since I heard of my sister's first seizure, and the means which the physician judged it necessary to use. My fears always preponderated, when I considered how much she must be weakened by repeated bleedings, &c., so that had she recovered from the fever, I concluded she would sink into a dropsy or consumption. I had been endeavouring to prepare my mind for the awful stroke, and God has been pleased to support me under it. The full satisfaction I had in my sister's temper and character, and the knowledge I had of her piety, give me the most encouraging prospect as to her present happy state. But at the same time I cannot but deeply lament the irreparable loss her family has sustained, especially the younger children, who are not sensible of it. * * *

* The death of his sister, Mrs. Smith of Birmingham.

Mr. Smith, I imagine, will find his loss greater and greater every day, as his business is large, and the cares of the family that will now devolve upon him, many and weighty. I earnestly pray that God may direct and sustain him. I am in great hope that Joseph will be a comfort to him, and as he has a good deal of sensibility in his temper, and has hitherto been very fond of the younger children, that he will in some degree supply the want of a prudent tender mother, though it can be but in a small one.

Many of my pleasing prospects are darkened at once. I believe I must now endeavour to forget Birmingham, and especially the farm, where I have spent so many agreeable days with my sister, and hoped for further pleasure of that kind: for how can I bear the sight of either? It would call up many ideas too mournful for me to endure, and make what used to be a pleasure, and the means of recruiting my health, a source of pain and an increase of weakness.

It is a great pleasure to me, under this affliction, to hear from you, as well as to observe, by his letters, that Mr. Smith bears this trial with so much patience and composure. I heartily wish "the sorrow of the countenance may make his and our hearts better," and that the children who are capable of recollecting their mother's instructions may never forget them. I am thankful for your kind visits to my sister in the beginning of her illness, while she was capable of conversation. You can possibly give me some account of her sentiments, disposition, and views at that time, which above every thing else we should be glad to hear. Some of my friends at Birmingham may think it strange that I did not visit her. The true and only reason was, I could not bear it. I know my own weakness best. Had I seen her in those languishing declining circumstances, it would not only have greatly injured my health and capacity for usefulness afterwards, but I should have been unable to have done her any service. I could neither have talked to her nor have prayed with her, without such a flow of affection as would have stopped my voice, and added to her pain instead of lessening it. I have never attempted to pray with my mother upon this sad occasion but once, and then I was forced to break off abruptly, and omit every thing that was suitable to the event. But Mr. Fownes has kindly supplied my defect. And indeed a person less deeply concerned is much the fittest to assist the sick and afflicted. It was with the utmost difficulty that I delivered a short discourse last Lord's day from Psalm lxxxviii. 18,* and I have scarcely recovered my small stock of spirits since. But I bless God I am able to do any thing. And I have a cheerful persuasion that my sister knew so much of my weakness and infirmity that she would kindly excuse my absence.

* See Discourses to the Aged, vol. i. p. 437.

I shall be very glad to do any thing in my power to serve the afflicted family, and especially to promote their best interests. And I desire and hope you will visit them as often as you can. Though Mr. Smith may not say much to you, I know he has a high esteem for you, as a wise and faithful friend, and will pay a particular regard to what you say. I have written to my nephew, and urged him in the strongest manner to receive and value your good admonitions, which I hope and believe he will do. As I imagine his mind is now peculiarly disposed to receive instruction, it will be particularly kind in you to give it, and likewise to drop a hint of advice among the servants, as by them you are held in reputation.

I read your letter to my mother, who returns you many thanks for your kind regard to her, and begs the continuance of your prayers. She bears this shock much beyond expectation. And indeed I admire the wisdom and kindness of Providence, which has so constituted the human frame, that affections weaken with age, and those events make but a slight impression then, which in early life would have been almost insupportable. I am sometimes ready to fear that my own mind is too little impressed with this event. Sometimes I think that my long weakness has brought upon me this symptom of age. I have been so inured to afflictions, have buried so many valuable friends, and see so much vanity, sin, and self, in this world, that I am not much moved by them. I wish I had equal reason to believe that my views of providence and a future state were so strong and lively as to account for my present composure, without having reference to any other cause. What I chiefly lament is, that I cannot find my heart so much quickened by this event as it ought to be; more serious and thoughtful; more diligent in my great work, and more close and lively in meditation on future blessedness. I have now buried the only brother and sister that grew up, both younger and more likely to live than myself. It is high time for me to awake out of sleep; to be more diligent in improving my time, more watchful over my own heart, more assiduous in serving Christ in the office with which he has honoured me, and more careful and fervent in working out my salvation. Let me have the continued help of your prayers that I may obtain a larger supply of the Spirit of Christ.

Amidst my sorrows, I truly and greatly rejoice in your capacity and inclination to serve the church, and the comfortable prospect you have among your young people, particularly at Oldbury, where I imagined you would find most encouragement.

Besides the books I mentioned to be given to children, I would recommend Foxton's Moral Songs, Watts's Preservative from the Sins and Follies of Youth, Great Britain's Memorial against Popery and the Pretender,—which is a useful book for children and comes cheap. To those about sixteen or seventeen

I used to give Amory's Sermon on Self-Dedication, your good father's Sermons on Irresolution, and Reynold's Letters to the Christian World. To the young men, Wright's Deceitfulness of Sin, Burgh's Friendly Monitor, besides Jennings' and Doddridge's Sermons to Young People.

I am sorry to hear of the differences at Carter Lane. You have probably heard of the division at Nottingham. May God give the dissenters "a spirit of love and of a sound mind." Many of our congregations seem more intent upon supporting the dissenting interest as a party, or their own particular tenets, than maintaining pure and undefiled religion.

I had a very kind letter from Mr. Ashworth this morning, condoling with me and comforting me under this affliction. The Lord make me more worthy of the esteem and affection of such good friends, and thankful that all my friends are not put into darkness! May God, if it be best for you, preserve you from such afflictions, or else afford you ample [experience] of those comforts with which you are kindly comforting others. And may he make all your consolations effectual to those to whom you administer them. I must write to Mr. Ashworth by this post. My time is short, my strength is small, therefore I can only add, that I am,

With the greatest esteem, &c.

LETTER X.

Salop, Dec. 15, 1761.

Dear Sir,—I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 11th instant, and more especially for your remarks on the note which I sent you. I am entirely of your mind, and intend to alter it. Before I print the sermons,* I will send you that head about the eternity of hell-torments, and shall desire your judgment. I have not time now to transcribe it, nor should I have written so much in a hurry, were it not for the account you give of Mr. Lucas, at which I am much concerned. I wish the doctor takes his case right. I cannot but think his complaints are entirely owing to the business in which he has been so long employed, and that many particles of those pernicious minerals which he used in refining, have got into his bowels and given him those violent pains. What confirms my suspicion is, a similar case in this town. I should think it worth while for Mr. Lucas to mention this to his physician, who may not perhaps know his manner of life. I am truly sensible how valuable

* On Eternity: see vol. i. p. 529.—The "note" referred to contained a severe animadversion on a piece of Mr. Bourn's of Norwich, who had written vehemently on the duration of future punishment.

and important his life is to his family, his friends, and the church. Be pleased to assure him of my tender sympathy with him, and earnest desire, if it be the will of God, that he may live long, and easy, and happy.

I did not at all wonder at your account of Mr. Rose's sentiments about a liturgy. I cannot think his reasons have that weight which he apprehends. I have often attended the public service of the established church, on state holidays, and our Infirmary meetings, but I never saw any dissenting congregation appear half so irreverent and unaffected in time of prayer, as I have seen the church people, and even some of the superior part of them. Mr. Rose's plea about "using the voice," seems to have little weight. It is the harmony in singing that affects, and not the mere voice. Besides, if any regard is to be paid to the apostolic and primitive models (which I think make greatly, and indeed unanswerably, for free prayer) no argument can be drawn from thence for "responses," or for the people's joining any otherwise than mentally, except in saying Amen.

I wonder how any dissenting ministers can satisfy their consciences to proceed in a method of worship which they think "destructive of the end of it;" or if they believe free prayer less likely to answer the end than a liturgy, I think they ought to attempt to introduce it, at least where there is a probability of success. But it will take in so few places, and where it does, will subsist so little a while, and occasion so much uneasiness and division, that I think the friends of a liturgy had better conform at once.*

In the compass of my acquaintance and intelligence, those who are most fond of forms are not the most serious of the lay-dissenters, nor the most zealous and laborious of ministers, but just the reverse. And if the attempt were to be made in many of our dissenting churches, it would soon break them to pieces: the wealthiest would go to church, and the poor to the methodists; except in such towns as Liverpool, where, out of several congregations, one might be formed that would, for a while at least, adhere to their new liturgy. But enough of this.

I am glad the lectures are going on,† and I wish you would take more liberty still, in leaving out impertinent references, or such as are only repetitions of others; and add more. They should be made as much as possible to books, chapters, and sections, not to pages, on account of the difference of editions.

I know you will afford Mr. Lucas as much of your company as your business will permit, and his spirits will bear. But too

* With due deference to the writer, it may be observed that a person may be consistently partial to a liturgy, and yet may have conscientious objections against conformity to the church of England.

† This refers to the publication of Dr. Doddridge's course of lectures, of which Mr. Clark was the editor, and no one was fitter for that office.

much confinement in a sick room will be bad for you. Of this you will beware. Remember the Italian proverb: "If you would eat much, eat little." It is applicable to study and labour. It is a very sickly time here. I bless God I am able to go on with my public work in some sort of a way. I find myself more liable to take cold than ever. But "having obtained help of God I continue to this day," and desire to live to him. I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Salop, March 20, 1762.

Dear Sir,—My Sermons on Eternity still lie in my desk. I have altered the note about Mr. Bourn thus—"He has in the most dogmatical manner," &c., which I hope will not be thought too severe.

I imagine that you have by this time seen Mr. Brekell's Remarks on the Preface to the New Liturgy, and likewise the second edition of Dr. Taylor's Scripture Account of Prayer, at the end of which there are some remarks on that preface, and on the liturgy itself; some of which I think are just, others trifling and ill-natured. I think the New Liturgy is by no means a contemptible performance. If it had been shorter, and less confused, I should have liked it better than any liturgy which has yet been published.

The Liverpool Liturgy is finished, and was read to the leading gentlemen of the new society at Liverpool at Christmas last. It is not yet published, but about fifty copies were printed off to send to some friends, whose remarks on the structure, sentiments, and language they desire. I have seen it; and it is much such a one as I expected. [Here follows a particular account of the three services of which it consists.] The minister is to use free prayer, if he pleases, before sermon, that so the advantages of it may be enjoyed with those of forms. The forms of adoration and thanksgiving are very good, though some of them are rather too elevated and pointed. The collects are concise; but many expressions in them are retained from the common-prayer, and are really some of the worse parts of it, being stiff and obscure.

My chief objection against this liturgy is, that it is scarcely a Christian liturgy; much less so than the new common-prayer book. In the thanksgivings, mention is made of Christ as a preacher and an example, nothing more. In the collects his name is hardly introduced. A few conclude "through Jesus Christ," but most omit that. His resurrection is only once mentioned, and his intercession not directly. Not a single text

that speaks of his dying for sin, or acting as a prophet, priest, or king. The Spirit is quite banished from this liturgy. I question whether his name once occurs, or whether a person who was to judge of Christianity only by this liturgy would know that there was a Holy Ghost. His descent upon the apostles, and the consequent spread of the gospel, is never mentioned. The people are taught, by the minister's address, to expect forgiveness upon confession, repentance, amendment, forgiveness of others, and confidence in the divine mercy; but not a word of Christ, of faith in him or love to him, nor, as I remember, any one act of the mind of which Christ is the object, nor any motives or considerations taken from the gospel. Grieved I am, and very much so, to see such an almost deistical composition.

Since I read it, I have turned over the whole New Testament; examined all the apostles' prayers; what they say of the terms of acceptance and forgiveness, and what regard to Christ and the Spirit they express and inculcate; and I must think, if they understood the gospel, the compilers of this liturgy have manifestly curtailed it. Had Dr. Taylor drawn up a liturgy it would have been much more evangelical. I cannot but lament that decay of real piety which I fear will be the consequence of introducing forms, and especially such imperfect ones as these. I fear when this liturgy is published, it will be a further injury to the Warrington Academy; for I hear almost all the subscribers in London (which were a considerable number) have withdrawn their subscriptions, seeing what manner of spirit the chief managers are of; and that Mr. S——— is gone to London to see if he can recover them. I design to write to Mr. H—— very freely about it. He and the rest of the compilers are very touchy upon this head, for it is their hobby-horse. I suppose I shall offend him, as I have already done, by only advising him that it might be a Christian liturgy. But I think it my duty to remonstrate, whatever be the consequence.

I would advise you to go on with your catechizing at Oldbury, without taking any notice of those that idolize the Assembly's Catechism. I had just the same difficulty here; but by degrees the prejudice soon abated, and all the children attended except those of one family; and now I believe no other but Dr. Watts's catechisms are learned. I find no difficulty in the children's learning the proofs; but then I divide the catechism into several parts, and they learn but a little at a time.

I had occasion to write to Mr. Farmer some time ago, and I transcribed that part of your letter to me, in which you remark upon his book [on Christ's temptation], but did not mention your name. He has sent me his judgment upon it, which I now send you. I know so much of his temper, that I am sure he would be very glad to hear from you on the subject. He desires to know whether his answer be satisfactory or not, and would

be glad to do any thing further to clear up the difficulty. In his letter he says, "In town my book has been improved to my prejudice, and is condemned by my brethren. By none of them is it openly espoused, though a few have privately owned their conviction. Dr. Law [Bishop of Carlisle], though he highly approved it, told a friend of mine, that he thought Hugh Farmer was a fictitious name, not supposing any one had courage enough to avow so unpopular an opinion. The first impression is pretty nearly sold off. If there be a call for a second, I will will add an Appendix in answer to objections. The most material one is that urged by your friend. I now despair of seeing my book answered. Two performances under the title of Answers (one of which was sent to the press) are not to make their appearance: for what reasons the authors best know." Mr. Reynell, of Totness, sends me word—"It is much admired in the west, and that he has not heard of any one of his brethren who have read it but thinks my friend has hit upon the right solution of the difficulty." What a strange disposition have the ministers in London, that not one of them who thinks Mr. Farmer's plan right can publicly say so. How uncomfortable must a situation there be, if they are so terribly afraid of one another. It is like living near the inquisition.* I bless God that we breath a freer air in the country, in this as well as many other respects.

[It is to be regretted that half of this letter is torn off, which, it is supposed, contained Mr. Farmer's solution of Mr. Clark's objection to his hypothesis of Christ's Temptation. But the substance of it doubtless appeared in his second edition, and most probably it is that which is numbered V., as he calls that "the most plausible objection."]

LETTER XII.

Salop, April 16, 1762.

Dear Sir,—I am not quite satisfied with Mr. Farmer's resolution of the difficulty you proposed; but as it does not affect the leading principle of his "Inquiry," and as I am satisfied with that, I shall not trouble myself further about it. If I have occasion to write to him again, I will mention to him what you say. But he will himself clear up the matter if there be another edition.

I am sorry you have done so little about the American collection. It is a great disadvantage to such designs when the most substantial persons in a society are covetous. As this is

* This matter is certainly much exaggerated. Mr. Farmer was too jealous, and Mr. Orton too severe.

the case here, I chose to make the collection in public. By this means I got more than I should have done by a personal application, and saved myself the pain and trouble of hearing and answering silly objections. The money I sent to Mr. Beatty in London was £120. I proposed some queries to him in order to clear up some objections that were made, principally by the church people.* It is indeed a burden upon the dissenters, but they are, by submitting to it, promoting the cause of liberty, and contributing to advance the knowledge of the gospel in that part of the world. And how can they employ their money better? I did not choose to mention this case to any of the church people, but I took care to have some of the memorials put into the hands of those whom I knew to be the most generous; and some of them did handsomely. Some who had heard that the collection was only for dissenters were so catholic as to send me their money. Others, who made this an objection, I assured that the distribution would be without distinction of party or denomination, and they were satisfied. Some trial was made whether a general collection would be encouraged, but it was found that it would not, and therefore Mr. Beatty was advised to apply only to the dissenters. Perhaps you remember that in the case of Mr. Finne, who came over to collect for the evangelical church at Breslau, the Archbishop of Canterbury first promised him countenance, supposing they were Episcopal, but when he heard that they were Presbyterians, he declined doing any thing. The particulars of this I had from your father and Dr. Doddridge.

We had a meeting of ministers here on Tuesday last. We were nine in all; which were as many as we usually have. We were obliged to Mr. Cole† for his company, and should have been glad of yours. We had only one sermon, as usual, more time being spent in prayer, particularly with an eye to the public, and the state of our churches. Mr. Andrews, of Bridgenorth, preached an ingenious sermon, but too high for most of his hearers. It was more serious and evangelical than I expected.

We talked over the affair of a fund for the widows and children of dissenting ministers, upon Mr. Henry's plan, which I presume you have seen. We are unanimous in thinking that plan, or something like it, is very desirable, and might be easily carried into execution. We all thought that Birmingham was the most proper place to be the centre of it, in these parts of the kingdom, both on account of its situation with respect to the bordering counties, and as you have so many ministers and tradesmen, of substance and character, to manage such a design. I had sent each of my brethren a copy of the Observations on

* Mr. B. was a Scotch divine, who had preached in America. The occasion of the collection I cannot learn. The philosopher and poet, it is well known, was a layman.

† Minister of Wolverhampton.

the Case of the Widows, &c., that they might consider the scheme before they met. Some objections were made to some parts of the plan; but they are such as will be easily got over. Our principal objection is, that we have (especially in Wales) so many congregations that raise nothing, or next to nothing, for their ministers; and their ministers' whole income is so small, that they cannot afford to pay twenty nor ten shillings a year towards such a fund. But if the scheme takes place, they are but where they were, and perhaps some contrivance might be made in forming the scheme, that these poor men's widows and children might have a little relief from this fund; as some ministers who may subscribe to it may die single, or leave widows so well provided for that they may not choose to demand that allowance from the fund which they have a right to. This would be the case with most in this county. I have written Mr. Fawcett* a large account of what passed at this meeting, and we desired Mr. Cole and Mr. Andrews, who proposed being at [the annual lecture at] Dudley, to let our brethren there know that we are desirous some such scheme should be set on foot, and could wish that a committee might be appointed at that meeting to consider of Mr. Henry's plan, and what alterations and improvements may be needful or desirable in the state of this country. I hope they will do what they can to push the matter forward, as I think it will be of great service to the dissenting interest in general; encouraging young men to devote themselves to the ministry, and ministers to marry. It would also tend to promote a greater union and connexion among the dissenters, who are now too much like a rope of sand.

I wish Mr. Jones does not repent of leaving Cradley. I think he is every way better than he will probably be at Walsall. I hear that he has a person in his eye to recommend to the people at Cradley, whose name is Baker. If he should not come, or should be disagreeable to the people, I know a person who would suit them extremely well; Mr. Palmer, a pupil of Mr. Ashworth's, who was here to help me during my illness last summer.†

My Sermons on Eternity are transcribed, and lie sleeping in my desk. I am in some doubt about them. I want you to come and read them. I do not believe they will pay for the printing, for I have few acquaintance that are likely to promote the sale,‡ nor can I take the mean method which some authors do, to put their friends to trouble and expense to sell their pieces.

* Minister of Kidderminster.

† It was on this occasion that the editor's happy acquaintance and correspondence with Mr. Orton commenced.

‡ In this the author was happily mistaken. The book has gone through many editions, and is among those given away by the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge.

If the Liverpool Liturgy appears in the present form, and without being made more evangelical, it will at least do some good. It will give many of the dissenters, especially among my people, a surfeit of forms of prayer, when they see so little of the gospel in them. They will conclude that it is the want of a serious spirit and a regard to the peculiarities of the gospel, which leads so many to be fond of them.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Salop, Dec. 26, 1762, *Lord's-day evening.*

Dear Sir,—I had yours yesterday, and should not have sat down to write this evening, after being thoroughly fatigued with preaching to young people yesterday, and to-day to old ones, but for a particular reason.* * * * I am thankful for your regard to my book, and shall direct Mr. Eddowes to fulfil your order. I love little books, that may easily be carried in the pocket, which made me choose to print the sermons in this small form. Buckland encourages me to hope that it will sell. I hear Mrs. Abney is pleased with it, and will distribute many among her servants and tenants. Her chaplain, Mr. Tayler, and her steward, Mr. Parker, will encourage her in this design. I have no greater joy than to hear that it is useful to any souls.

Mr. Fawcett in one of his last letters, gave me the account to which you refer, of the piety and zeal of some clergymen of the establishment. I "wish them good speed in the name of the Lord." I see no necessary connexion between Calvinistical sentiments and zealous useful labours: but I have long observed, with great surprise, that our orthodox brethren, in the church and among the dissenters, are in general most serious and active in their ministry; and those of freer principles more indolent and languid. I have met with few exceptions in the compass of my acquaintance. I do deliberately think that the more persons enter into the peculiarities of the gospel, and the greater regard they pay to the sacrifice of Christ and the influences of the Spirit, the more their own piety will increase, and the more zealous they will be to do good to the souls of others. And I think it is not difficult to account for this. I believe I have mentioned to you Witherspoon's Essay on the Connexion between the Doctrines of Grace and a Holy Life, which I really esteem an excellent book, though he has some peculiarities which I cannot assent to. I think he has accounted for this

* A private affair, relating to the disposal of a youth. This part of the letter, though uninteresting to the public, manifests the great benevolence of the writer, in his readiness to serve a widow lady.

connexion in a very rational judicious manner, and his statement is, in my judgment, confirmed by fact.

The case of Mr. T——'s servant was a very critical one, and I do not much wonder that you found some difficulty to choose a proper book to put into his hand. Perhaps Dr. Doddridge's Sermons on Regeneration, especially that entitled An Address to an awakened Sinner, might have been as proper as any. But if his education has been bad, and his abilities are small, Reynold's Compassionate Address to the Christian World might have been more so. Or if he be a person of a tolerable understanding, your father's Sermons on Irresolution in Religion, would have been the most proper book that I know of.

I own myself not quite satisfied with the passage you refer to in the Rise and Progress. Yet thus far I think the doctor is right,—that the first business of an awakened sinner should be prayer, and that he should not defer his earnest application to God, through Christ, for pardon and assistance, till he has broken off his sins and set about a reformation; because prayer has a direct and powerful tendency to lead him to this, and confirm his resolution for it. It is likewise necessary, I apprehend, to guard men against depending on the reformation of some vices, and the practice of some duties, as the foundation of their hope of acceptance with God; for by this they may stop short of a real total change. I cannot but think the scripture countenances such expressions as the doctor and some of our old divines used, particularly of "coming to Christ, fleeing to him, trusting in him," and the like. But then these should be explained, as I think they may rationally be. It is said, "We never read of any coming to Christ, or being called to him, after his resurrection." But I think the contrary is plain from 1 Pet. ii. 4. By this expression I understand, making a serious solemn application *to him* (as well as to God through him), as he is the Lord and Saviour, and has the bestowing of the most important blessings relating to our souls and their eternal interests. By "fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us" (which I think, with Peirce and others, means Christ): by the expressions of "trusting in him and committing that to him" (referred to 2 Tim. ii. 12), I understand a direct application to Christ, committing the soul to his custody and care. The primary idea of faith is reposing confidence in another, and I think this enters into the idea of saving faith. When a person repents, is sorry for his sins, and is concerned for the safety of his soul, it is proper he should look to the Saviour. And I think those regards to Christ, which are expressed by these phrases, have a natural tendency both to humble and encourage the convinced sinner, and to excite his zealous attempts to break off his sins, and set about the practice of every duty. And I have seen, in fact, that those persons

who have been impressed with these views of things have been true penitents, and have shown a great and constant regard to the whole of religion in their future life; while others who have been awakened to a general sense of the evil and danger of sin, and have set about a reformation without these evangelical views, have only broken off some grosser sins, but have been shamefully remiss in many important duties, especially in the divine virtues.

The Old Testament saints had, indeed, only the general promises of mercy to trust to. But then might not their sacrifices, which they were obliged to offer in order to obtain pardon, in cases where their sins were not wilful, tend to promote such humiliation and caution in their degree, as the sacrifice of Christ does in a higher? And might not they have some regard to the Messiah, though their ideas of him might be obscure? Since the apostle says, " that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant," &c. (Heb. ix. 15). I think we have no such general promises in the New Testament, of forgiveness upon repentance and turning from sin, as in the Old. There is generally expressed some regard to Christ; and where it is not directly mentioned, it must be understood by comparing one part of the New Testament with another. And I question whether any sinner, who enjoys the gospel, will turn from his sins so as to become prevailingly holy and be entitled to salvation, without greater regard to Christ as the way to the Father, the medium of forgiveness, and the communicator of divine assistances, than many divines ever mention in their preaching, or think necessary. Whence it is, that while they preach so much about repentance and turning to God, we hardly ever meet with an instance of a person who really does it, till he is influenced by some views of things that are more evangelical.

I would not differ with any person about particular phrases and modes of expression, especially those that are not scriptural. But the more I read the New Testament, and the more observation I make of what passes about me, the more I see the importance of insisting much on the peculiarities of the gospel. I would always take care not to transfer our obligations from God to Christ, but to represent it as our principal duty to " come to the Father through the Son;" but then I would show Christians the *necessity* of coming *through the Son*, and of maintaining an habitual regard to him in all our applications to the Father.

Did you ever read Nathaniel Taylor's Discourse on Faith in Christ, in opposition to the Unitarians? I am much pleased with many things in that book, and especially the manner in which he explains the nature of faith. If you have not seen it I will send it you when I have opportunity. And I conclude

with addressing you as Mr. Eliot, the Indian apostle, did a minister who came to see him when he was dying: "Brother, brother, let there be much of Christ in your ministry if you would ever win souls. I dread a Christless Christianity."

You will probably hear the sentiments of some of my brethren about my little book. If they suggest any thing that may be altered for the better, please to remember it and inform me, or if you observe any thing yourself.

My last letters from Northampton encourage me to hope that Mr. Hextal* will be comfortable and useful there. I hear of the death of Mr. Wilkinson, minister at Shields, in Durham. He was a worthy, useful man, has left a widow and several small children, who, I fear, are but poorly provided for.

You will conclude, by the length of this letter, that I am not much tired with my work, except its imperfections should discover it. But I know your candour, and write to you freely without reserve. I am almost a prisoner at home, and cannot ride above four or five miles without greatly suffering by it, so that it will be an act of compassion, as well as friendship, to come and spend two or three days with me, if you can spare so much time. Perhaps a journey that would kill *me* would do you good. I am sure your company would do *me* good. However pray for me. These easterly winds rush in at every pore, stop perspiration if I am out a few moments, and throw me into dreadful nervous complaints. But "having obtained help of God I continue to this day," and desire to leave every future event to his gracious providence. To that I heartily commend you in all your connexions, concerns, and interests, and am, dear sir, your very affectionate and faithful friend and servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XIV.

TO MR. HUGHES,† AT THE ACADEMY, DAVENTRY.

Kidderminster, Sept. 12, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—As I had so little of your company while you were in these parts, I am glad of this opportunity, by Mr. T., to converse with you a little in this way. I desire to rejoice

* An amiable man and a respectable minister, who removed from Sudbury on account of dissensions occasioned by a party spirit in electing members of parliament, and succeeded Mr. Gilbert in the congregation of which Dr. Doddridge had been pastor, where he soon met with equally cruel usage, and was obliged to withdraw to a new chapel which his friends erected for him, where he ended his days in peace. His great candour and benevolence gave occasion to narrow-minded people, who disliked some that espoused his cause, to charge him with the want of orthodoxy; whereas, in point of sentiment, he was, in fact, higher than the generality of acknowledged Calvinists. Such is the blindness of bigotry.

† Mr. John Hughes was a native of Shrewsbury, and one of Mr. Orton's congregation, whose instruction he had enjoyed from his earliest years, and under whose patronage he pursued his academical studies at Daventry; from his first entrance on

and be thankful that God hath inclined you to devote yourself to the services of the sanctuary, and that he hath given you such abilities for the discharge of them. It gives me pleasure to find that your public labours have been so acceptable to several congregations where you have preached; and I pray God to increase your abilities more and more, and enable you by close study, and especially by serious reflection and fervent prayer, to attain a richer furniture both of head and heart, for the great work to which you have devoted yourself.

But it hath occasioned me some pain, mingled with this pleasure, to find that the highest commendations of your public services have been given me by those who seem to have the least of the life and power of religion, and who judge by what pleases their fancy, and gratifies a curious taste. When I inquired of some plain, serious, excellent Christians, how they liked Mr. Hughes, they answered modestly, that "he was a promising young man, and had a good way of speaking, but did not seem so serious as a minister of the gospel should be; was not so evangelical, and entered not so much into the spirit of the gospel, as they hoped a pupil of Dr. Ashworth's would, and as their own minister did." This gave me much concern; for though the former sort are better judges of reasoning, language, and elocution, the latter are far better judges of religion, and what is good and useful preaching. You will therefore allow me, and take well, the freedom I use, to entreat you seriously to consider what is the great end of the gospel ministry, and how it is most likely to be effectually answered.

The gospel is the religion of guilty creatures. A revelation supposes ignorance, guilt, and weakness; and the Christian revelation is grounded upon this circumstance, and represents the blessed God as forming a wise and kind design, to recover his degenerate creatures to holiness and happiness, by his son Jesus Christ. If the gospel be any thing, it is a great thing; it is indeed every thing, and its leading truths and principal motives ought to run through every prayer and sermon; without which it is impossible any prayer should be a Christian prayer, or any preacher a Christian preacher. Persons of lively parts are apt to be fond of those sentiments and methods of address which are new and fashionable; to commend them in others, and cultivate them themselves, without considering what is true, what is becoming their character and station as ministers, and what is useful. They are prone to despise the sentiments and way of our fathers, and those of the present age who still adhere to them, and thus they run into the contrary and more

which, till the time of Mr. Orton's death, he was favoured with his correspondence, and was treated with a paternal kindness. Several of the valuable letters which he sent him, being lent to different persons, were unhappily lost. The following are all that remained, which Mr. Hughes conveyed to the editor, a few months before his decease, at Bury in Lancashire, with a view to their being inserted in this collection.

dangerous extreme. When they get out of an ancient mistake, they know not where to stop.

I cannot but fear that you have entertained some prejudices against that strain of praying and preaching which you heard at Shrewsbury, and have since heard at Daventry; and seem verging to the new-fashioned way. You must indulge me to give you a fatherly caution on this head, grounded on a real and tender concern for your reputation and usefulness, and on my own longer acquaintance with, and experience of, the different ways of preaching. Whatever your attainments may have been, you are yet but a young divine, and therefore should, out of modesty, be extremely cautious as to the strain and manner of preaching you contract. When you get more acquainted with your bible, and especially with your own heart, which is the preacher's best qualification, you will see things in a different light. And when you have opportunity of seeing and observing more of the state of religion in our congregations, you will find what I have long since found (and every year that I live increases my conviction of it), that when ministers entertain their hearers with lively and pretty things, confine themselves to general harangues, insist principally on moral duties, without enforcing them warmly and affectionately by evangelical motives; while they neglect the peculiars of the gospel, never or seldom display the grace of God and the love of Christ in our redemption, the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by, and constant dependence upon, the Holy Spirit of God, for assistance and strength, in the duties of the Christian life, their congregations are in a wretched state: some are dwindling to nothing; as is the case with several in this neighbourhood, where there are not now as many scores as there were hundreds in their meeting-places fifty years ago. But where, by trade and manufactures, new persons come to the place and fill up the vacant seats, there is a fatal deadness spread over the congregations; they run in "the course of this world;" follow every fashionable folly; and family and personal godliness seems in general to be lost among them. There is scarcely any appearance of life and zeal in the cause of religion, which demands and deserves the greatest.

Whereas, on the contrary, I never knew an instance, where the minister was a pious, serious man, whose strain was evangelical and affectionate, but his congregation kept up, though death and removals had made many breaches in it. And in short, ministers of this latter sort have had, in general, more respect and affection from their people than the former.

It seems an agreeable thing to a lively young minister, to be settled in a congregation and neighbourhood where he may say what he pleases without offence; and he may despise some serious persons, as narrow and injudicious, but when he grows

older, and begins to hope to see some success of his labour, he will very probably find little but a cold formality; and as his own graces, and concern for the interest of religion, increase (if they should increase), his disappointment will be more grievous, and he may see the necessity of altering his plan and strain of preaching when it is too late to do it. I have seen and known so many melancholy instances of this kind, that I cannot but hint the caution to you. In this view, therefore, I would recommend it to you carefully to guard against every prejudice, and especially against despising or thinking lightly of what your tutors recommend, and that because they recommend it. I have seen so much of this at Northampton, in persons who afterwards sunk into contempt as preachers, that there is nothing I am more afraid of than your getting into that error; especially as several of your tutor's pupils have acted this part, and still most ungratefully and falsely censure and misrepresent him.

I would recommend it to you to converse much with the word of God; not so much as a critic, to understand its meaning (though that is highly important), as a Christian, and especially a Christian minister; to enter into its spirit and feel its power, influencing, purifying, and elevating your own soul. With the same view I would recommend it to you to read some practical divinity every day; especially the works of Flavel, Henry, Watts, Doddridge, and writers of that strain and spirit, whom God eminently honoured as instruments of great usefulness in his church. Above all, Baxter, who was, with regard to the success of his labours and writings, superior to them all.

The power of religion will wither and decline in your own soul, if secret devotion be either neglected or negligently performed. The minister that is not full of devotion and seriousness, and clothed with purity and zeal, is but "an idle shepherd;" and however he may excel in learning, critical skill, and wit, can never answer the great purposes of the gospel ministry, in quickening dead souls, and bringing men to that purity, spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness, which the gospel enjoins.

It is the more necessary for me to give you a caution on this head, because the natural liveliness of your spirits may have a fatal influence on the state of religion in your own soul, and on your acceptance and usefulness in the world. A gay dissenter at B—— told a friend of mine lately, "that he was much pleased with Mr. Hughes, and wished they had such a minister." Being asked why, after some reasons that did you honour, he added—"Because he is a merry man." This reason which was given in the close dreadfully sunk my spirits, which before were much raised, on hearing a good account of you. I thought with myself, was this the best thing that * * could say of my friend? Was this a recommendation, and a proper encomium of a Christian minister, that he was "a merry man?" What must

he be, who could make such a circumstance a test of his esteem for a minister? and how much must that minister demean himself that could give occasion for it?

I am far from being an enemy to cheerfulness.* It is the ornament of a man and a Christian, and ought to be cultivated as a virtue that recommends and adorns religion. A sour, morose, unsocial temper, is unbecoming a Christian, much more a minister; and tends to prejudice his hearers against his instructions. But surely to be "a merry man" is never mentioned in the New Testament as a qualification of a minister. I would not carry matters so far as one of the fathers does, who says, "Nugæ in ore sacerdotis sunt blasphemiæ." But surely nothing, except gross vice, can sink a minister's character more than a behaviour which may lead persons to give him that title. Such a one doth not deserve to be called Reverend. To be the fiddle of the company is indeed a very contemptible character; and those that are the most desirous to be diverted by such a person, will be the first to despise and laugh at him behind his back.

Men of lively parts will sometimes throw out a cheerful jest; and it may be quite innocent. But if they indulge that humour, it will grow upon them; and though their wit and humour do not grow licentious, as it often does, it gives offence, and sinks their character.

You will therefore consider your danger, and be upon the strictest guard against every thing that hath the appearance of levity; always choosing to speak what may do real good, rather than make the hearers laugh, and, in the apostle's language, "may administer grace" to them. It is in short a want of seriousness and gravity, both in and out of the pulpit, which renders so many ministers unacceptable and useless, more than their particular sentiments or strain of preaching. May God preserve you from this error, and enable you to contract that manly gravity which becomes the scholar and the Christian, and that deep seriousness which recommends the minister; which are perfectly consistent with an easy, friendly, cheerful spirit. * * *

I would make great allowance for the inexperience of young minds, but it is a part of real friendship to caution them against the errors into which they are likely to fall, and by which others have been ensnared and hurt; and it is the part of good sense, candour, and Christian humility, to attend to such cautions. But I have quite tired myself with this long epistle. I hope you will esteem it a real and substantial proof of my friendship for you, and concern for your reputation, welfare, and usefulness, which very much depend on attending not merely to the great

* Mr. Orton himself possessed as much cheerfulness and humour as most men: he could therefore only intend to censure that kind of mirth which consists of mimicry and buffoonery, to which he might suspect his correspondent to be addicted.

concerns of the Christian and the minister, but to those little things which young persons are ready to overlook and despise. You have a daily share in my best wishes and prayers, that God would by his grace keep you from error on the right hand and the left; that he would enlighten your mind with a more clear, distinct, and comprehensive knowledge of the gospel; that you may indeed be a Christian preacher, and set out with a determination to "make known nothing" in comparison with "Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and that you may always maintain that seriousness and gravity which best becomes one who is to "watch for souls," and considers himself as "a dying preacher, preaching to dying hearers, the living truths of the living God."* To this end, may "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be always with your spirit. Amen." I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XV.

TO THE REV. MR. HUGHES, AT THE ACADEMY, DAVENTRY.

Kidderminster, Dec. 2, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—I have just received your letter, and sit down to answer it, that I may send by to-morrow's post. I know nothing of the congregation at Horwich, but see no material objection to your going to them at Christmas, as they desire it. Dr. Ashworth is a better judge than I can be, and his opinion, that it is proper for you to go there, leads me to concur. Only you will be careful to travel at as little expense as may be, and not to stay longer from your business and studies than is necessary. I would also advise, that while you are there you do not make many excursions to see your friends, but spend your time in study, and visiting the people; as by going among them you will better judge of their tempers, inclinations, and views; and whether a settlement would be comfortable. You will, no doubt, consult those ministers in the neighbourhood, who know the congregation best; and if you can go to Bolton on a Monday, you will have an opportunity of hearing a sermon, and seeing some of your brethren, whom you may consult.

I am very glad to hear that the people of Horwich are, what they call in that country, orthodox. I hope it is a sign that they have a good deal of seriousness among them, and are not got into the new-fashioned notions, and ways of living, too common among modern dissenters, and which are evidently ruinous to the interest of real religion. Upon your own prin-

* Baxter.

ciples, therefore, you will endeavour to accommodate yourself to their taste. But remember, this is to be done in that and all cases, as far, and no farther, as you can do it with a good conscience towards God. They that go beyond this do wrong. "If I please men," saith the apostle (meaning without such a limitation), "I am not the servant of Christ."

The age is polite and intelligent enough, but not so sensible in matters of religion. The dissenters in general know much less of it, even in theory, than their fathers; who studied their bibles, and read practical books more. Plain preaching is as needful as ever. But you will always remember, that there is a great difference between being plain and low. The plainer your discourses are, they will not only be the more intelligible to the weaker, but equally, yea more acceptable to the truly judicious, and more likely to be useful to all.

I am sorry you have met with such poor encouragement, and especially with any ill treatment, from the people in Northamptonshire. I know them well. Some of them are narrow and bigoted; but in general they are serious, exemplary Christians; and the bulk of them are not disposed to use a minister ill who is not imprudent, and doth not directly oppose their favourite notions; which is the only way to make people hold them the faster. They are not disposed to censure a person that preaches in a serious experimental manner, and in an evangelical strain, though he doth not use many of their favourite phrases; but will bear almost any thing from the pulpit where the main thing is not wanting.

You will consider what the congregation at Horwich is likely to do for you, and how you may live in that country; and I hope, if Providence should lead you there,* you will endeavour, by all prudent frugality, to save something before you marry. I pray God to direct you in this important concern. Determine nothing while you are upon the spot, but take time, after your return, to consider and deliberate about it. I had not heard of Mr. Seddon's death, though I have long expected the account. It affected me greatly, for his circumstances and age nearly resembled my own. It is a wonder that I am alive. May I live to some good purpose, glorify God, and serve the Lord Christ, in my present solitude and obscurity.

I am yours, &c.

* It appears from the next letter, written about two years after this (some intervening ones being lost), that Mr. Hughes continued about so long at this place.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE REV. MR. HUGHES, AT BURY.

April 22, 1771.

Dear Sir,—I am glad to hear that you are comfortably fixed at Bury, where I heartily wish you much success in your ministerial labours. I have this day sent you a box of books, directed to be left with Mr. S—, who I presume is one of your hearers. I have paid the carriage to Manchester. It contains the books I mentioned to you in my last, and several more. You will allow me to say a little upon the subjects of them.

Baxter's Directory I would recommend to your frequent reading. You will find many things useful to you in most of your compositions, especially upon some critical points of conscience. Craddock's Knowledge and Practice will furnish you with plans of sermons, many good thoughts, and a judicious collection of scriptures on almost every subject. I have known no book so well adapted to help a young minister at his first setting out. His commentaries you will consult as you have occasion; though as illustrations of scripture stories they are worth reading through. Indeed he is the most noted and valuable commentator of his age. Evans's Sermons you will read and read again; and I could wish you to form all your preaching on Christian duties and all points of morality upon his plan; enforcing all your advices and directions by evangelical arguments, as he doth, or else they will have little effect. Scott's Christian Life, the first volume only.

Henry on Prayer, and the Essay on Prayer (by Angel, author of the Short-hand), you will look into often, especially every Lord's day morning and noon, that you may increase your gift of prayer, by laying up in your memory a variety of scriptural and other pertinent expressions and forms of address. I have found, and others have found, great use by both. But in Angel's collection* you will find many philosophical and metaphysical expressions, which your own sense will show are highly improper. Nothing will contribute so much to your acceptance and usefulness, as to have your mind well stored with a rich variety of sentiments and expressions proper for prayer, that you may have a due copiousness on every subject and occasion.

The Life of Mr. Heywood is worth your perusal, as he seems to have been a very considerable man for his age. The older books you will do well to read over, and consult on proper occasions. I have sent you a few of Doddridge's and Baxter's pieces (all I have), my Sermons on Prayer, and some other plain

* This contains several prayers, taken in short-hand after dissenting ministers, while praying.

and practical pieces, which will be of use to lend out to your poorer people; and some of my Discourses on Eternity, which you will give to poor families. I have filled up the box with pamphlets. There are, I think, few of them but are worth your reading, and those that are valuable you may get half-bound for a small expense. Calamy on Moderate Conformity I desire you will give to Mr. E—— of H——; likewise one of Doddridge's Sermons on the Evil and Danger of neglecting the Souls of Men; and let the other be read again and again by you, till you feel, and your people feel (as they soon will if *you* do), the good effects of it. I have sent you several of the sermons and charge at my ordination; keep one, and distribute the rest to any ministers of your acquaintance.

I could wish you to borrow of your congregation any books of their old divines, who lived in Lancashire and the neighbourhood, which they have in their houses. Some of them are extremely valuable; as those of Pendlebury, Nathaniel and Oliver Heywood, Aldred, &c. They were men of distinguished ability, and eminent piety and zeal. Though some of their sentiments are indefensible, and their language low and mean, yet there is a savour of piety, seriousness, and concern for the interest of religion; and so much experience of human nature, and the workings of the heart, are hardly to be met with in any modern compositions. There are also many little instructive and striking stories, which may well be adopted, and would render a discourse in which they are introduced popular, pleasing, and useful.

I am glad to hear that Mrs. B——* hath furnished you with so many valuable books. Dr. Taylor and Dr. Clark may be useful. If you consult the indexes, when about to compose a sermon, you may find some pertinent texts and illustrations. But I hope I need not remind you to judge for yourself, and not be implicitly led by such great names. I think Dr. Taylor hath egregiously mistaken the sense of many texts, even more than Dr. Clark, and seems to write more under the influence of a plan of his own than becomes an impartial writer, and forces many texts to accord with it. You will soon see that he was a Socinian, which Dr. Clark was not. Mr. Bourn's Sermons discover much good sense, but few men write with more assurance, I think I may say impudence, than he. His father's sermons (who was minister at Birmingham) are much more valuable, and better models for a young minister to form his style and manner of address upon. So are his grandfather's, who was minister at Bolton, which probably you may meet with in your town or neighbourhood.

I now proceed to the particulars of your letter. That the people at Horwich were unwilling to part with you, looked well, and I consider it as a proof that your labours were acceptable to

* The former minister's widow.

them, and your behaviour among them becoming your station and character. I am glad they are likely to be comfortably settled with Mr. Evans. My compliments to him. I wish him encouragement and success. Lend him any of your books, when you can spare them, as I imagine he is but poorly furnished with books as yet.

As to the clergy of * * *, I would not have you get any acquaintance with them till you thoroughly know what their characters and tempers are. There are few clergymen by whose acquaintance you would reap any benefit. The more ingenious and learned among them too generally want seriousness, and many of them are far from possessing that candour and moderation which one would expect from their learning. Those who I hope are truly serious, and concerned to do good, are frequently great bigots to the church, and very uncharitable in their sentiments, will secretly undermine the reputation of a dissenting minister if they can, when they find he is not as narrow and rigid as themselves.* Mr. Bradock† was a man of uncommon good sense, prudence, and sagacity, and of remarkable candour and benevolence. So that if he avoided any acquaintance with them, I think it a clear evidence that they are not worth yours. But you will in time learn more of them, and judge for yourself how far an acquaintance with them would be advantageous.

There is a new edition of my Catechism in the press, but as I have made some additions to it already, and it ought not to sell for above one shilling, I cannot add the appendix you desire, nor is it indeed needful, as there are many small pieces in which our dissent is well vindicated.

I shall be glad to see you here when you can make it convenient; but as you are so lately settled among your people, you should keep as close to them and to your work as your health will admit, and guard, as far as you prudently can, against that waste of time and money which taking journeys, especially long ones, always occasions. I have nothing particular to say by way of advice, only that you would frequently look into Dr. Doddridge's Life, and seriously consider the advices therein given, and illustrated by his example, with a particular reference to the state of the congregation under your care; as I know not that I can add any thing to them, and am confirmed in the propriety of them more and more every day.

If the family where you board hath children, servants, and workmen, as I suppose, you will consider them as part of your charge as a minister. Talk seriously to them, especially on a Lord's day evening, and lend them plain practical books. Do

* Meaning, in regard to doctrinal controversy. The above expressions may seem uncandid; but Mr. Orton was not defective in candour, and he would have allowed many individuals of the clergy to be worthy characters, with several of whom he maintained a friendly intercourse.

† The former dissenting minister.

the same also by any of your landlord's manufacturers, who may work in his shop, though they do not lodge in his house. This will recommend you to the family, if they are really religious, and to your congregation in general; and you will be better prepared for the religious instruction of a family of your own. Hereby you will learn the art of conversing with children, servants, and other illiterate people; which is a matter of great importance, and requires more skill and care than to prepare sermons or converse with the learned and judicious.

I bless God I am as well as I can expect to be after so long and severe a winter. With my best wishes and prayers for your health, and daily improvement of your abilities and graces, and the success of your labours,

I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XVII.

Oct. 10, 1771.

Dear Sir,—I had yours of Sept. 23rd, and am glad to hear of your health, and that your situation continues to be agreeable to you. Providence hath led you into a place where you have many circumstances to make you easy and happy. But the main thing that will contribute to, or greatly enhance, your happiness, will be to see the success of your labours; to observe that the careless are awakened and convinced; brought to serious reflection, penitence, and prayer; and that they who have entered on a religious course proceed steadily and cheerfully in it. I hope you will have the pleasure to observe this, and you may comfortably expect that pleasure, through the blessing of God, in proportion to the pains you take in your public ministrations, and private addresses to your people. And the more pains you take with your own heart in secret, to keep it near to God and cherish an ardent zeal for his glory, the more diligent and earnest and successful you will be in your applications to the hearts and consciences of your hearers. God hath graciously given you acceptance among them, and I have a persuasion that your behaviour will be such, that you will grow in their esteem, and never give them reason to "despise your youth," or on any account cause "your good to be evil spoken of."

It gives me great pleasure to hear that you pursue the good work of catechizing. This will endear you both to parents and children, and lay a foundation for both of them to improve by your instructions. I know not what to advise on this head, but what your own judgment will suggest;—that all addresses to children must be plain and serious, and, as far as may be, lively and affectionate, that you may engage their attention. It will

be of singular advantage to have your language as easy and familiar as possible, consistently with the respect you owe to yourself and hearers, on the Lord's day, and in his house.* If you can collect some little histories and anecdotes, to illustrate the particular heads and questions you are upon, it will be singularly acceptable and useful. As many such will occur in the course of your reading, particularly in the lives of pious and useful men, and some in the History of England, it will be proper to make memorandums of them in your interleaved catechism, that you may have them ready, and not trust too much to your memory. Though I think I need not illustrate my meaning, yet I will give you one instance as a specimen, which has just occurred in my reading. Under the head of Trust in God, one particular in the catechism is—"Contrary to this is too great expectation from men." Here the story of the Earl of Strafford, in Charles I.'s time, may be introduced; who, when he was sentenced to death by the parliament, and the king had promised to give him a pardon, but through political reasons, and probably his wife's influence, signed the warrant for his execution, he, lifting up his eyes to heaven, smote his hands together, and said, —"Put not your trust in princes, for in them is no help." You will meet with many little stories in the Roman histories; some of which you will find it worth while to read, though it were only to select such; as Valerius Maximus, Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers, and especially Rollin's Ancient History. You will also find many such stories in Clark's Lives that would be useful to you in this exercise, and in your pulpit services.

I think you may take at least twenty minutes in this service without encroaching upon the people's patience. You will always be careful not to confound or terrify the children, but speak gently to them, and do every thing to encourage them. Your catechizing them in public will afford you this advantage, that when you visit any of the families whose children are your catechumens, you may naturally take an opportunity of grafting some serious advices to them upon what was said in your last catechetical lecture, and thereby of dropping some hints by which their parents, and the servants of the family, if they are present, may be instructed. Thus a considerable difficulty in pastoral visits will be obviated; viz. How to introduce serious edifying discourse naturally, so that it may not appear abrupt and forced in; and thus it will be more likely to engage their concurrence in it, and desire to carry it on. This advantage I have often found likewise from having a society for books in the congregation. To prevent trifling discourse, when visiting any family, who are members of that society, it will be natural to ask what books they have had of late; to make some general remarks upon them; and to suggest some important lessons which

* It is here supposed that the catechizing was in public.

it is desirable to learn from them. You will at once see that any thing which will give you an opportunity of naturally introducing some religious discourse, is of great service, in removing one of the principal difficulties of ministers in making a right use of their pastoral visits.

I was a little surprised to hear that you had baptized some children.* This, in our fathers' days, would have been deemed a great irregularity and breach of order. I presume there was something peculiar in the circumstance that led you to do it. I have indeed no notion of ordination as conferring power and authority, or giving any thing like validity to the administration of ordinances by a minister. But it seems to be a service highly proper in itself, as a minister's solemn dedication of himself to the Lord and to his work; and it appears to me to be evidently grounded on divine authority and apostolic practice. I think some of the young ministers in your parts have run into an extreme as absurd and more mischievous than that of our fathers. And, indeed, there is a degree of superstition shown and practised in avoiding what hath been called superstition, and in acting directly contrary to it. I have seen and heard a good deal of this. I could wish you to read a Dissertation of Hallett's on the subject of Ordination, which is among his Notes on Scripture; and which I think is one of the best, most rational, and scriptural, I ever saw on the subject.

As the administration of baptism is an affair of great importance and no little difficulty, to give a just, scriptural, and useful idea of it to parents, I hope you will study the subject attentively. Addington hath lately published a small piece upon it, which I think comprehends every thing valuable that hath been written. It will be of peculiar importance for you to make yourself master of the controversy, as you have so many baptists in and about Roffendale, which is not far from you; and they are very bigoted and very solicitous to make proselytes.† This reminds me to add, that Hallett hath a Dissertation on Baptism, which is an excellent one, and gave me as much satisfaction on that point as any thing I have read. The main thing in the administration of baptism is, to show parents its use and importance, and what effect it should have upon them; that they may not consider it as a mere ceremony, or rest satisfied, as most do, with some general confused notion that it is a Christian duty, without considering what end it was intended to answer.

I admire nothing so much in Dr. Priestley, as his zeal and activity. I wish it were always well directed. Every thing that tends to represent Christianity as a number of speculative opinions

* Not having been ordained to the pastoral office.

† It is with the full approbation of an eminent baptist minister that the above severe reflection is retained, as too evidently just.

rather than as a rule of life, must be very mischievous. Yet as opinions have an evident influence on morals and practice, we must be very careful what opinions we receive and preach, and what we reject and despise; for we have no more claim to infallibility than our fathers. And it plainly appears from the New Testament, that those doctrines of the gospel which the apostles inculcated have all of them a practical tendency; and on the leading truths relating to Christ and the Spirit they graft the sublimest morals; and plainly suggest the importance of their being received and digested in order to produce universal holiness and goodness. This you will observe in reading the New Testament, and it deserves to be seriously considered.

I wish they may find a successor to good Mr. Mottershead * equal to him, and who will support his character and reputation, and that of the ministry, so well as he hath done. He hath been honoured with an uncommon length of life, vigour, and usefulness.

I hear Dr. Ashworth has so many parlour boarders this year, that he is enlarging his house in order to accommodate them. I had rather have heard that he had more divinity students; for parlour boarders seldom do service or credit to a dissenting academy. He is in better health and spirits than before the vacation. I hope he will be long spared, as his life is of great importance to our interest in its present low state. I am glad to hear that it revives among you; but it is almost sunk to nothing in those parts of Cheshire which I am acquainted with; and this I think must be owing to that which is indeed the grand source of its decay every where; the want of seriousness in our ministers, and by their principles and practices, making concessions in favour of fashionable indulgences, and neglect of religious exercises.

I was sorry to find that you had bad weather for your harvest, but yours is a wet country. You have upon an average about thirty inches of rain fall in a year; whereas we have but nineteen. As damp weather much affects me, I am glad I do not live under the sign Aquarius. I hope your situation will not be injurious to your health, and that it will be vigorously employed in the service of your great master, while it is continued, that you may have comfortable reflections when you lose it. You will, I hope, keep up and improve your knowledge of the languages, and read some practical divinity every day. I advise you to write and study standing, which will be best for your health, and to keep yourself, whether standing or sitting, as erect as possible. But I have got to the end of my paper. I write freely as if I were talking to you. I am as well as ever I expect to be. May God strengthen you with strength in your understanding and heart, and smile upon all your attempts to do good.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

* Minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Manchester

LETTER XVIII.

April 13, 1772.

Dear Sir,—As I can write to you by a friend going to Manchester, without expense, I embrace the opportunity, though I have little time or spirits to write. I am glad to hear of your health and encouragement in your work. Your plan of sermons seems well calculated to do good; but perhaps it may be better for a year or two, to preach miscellaneous ones, as it is not so convenient, if you are at any time under a necessity of preaching a sermon over again, to take it out of a series, as to repeat any other. I dare say, in your discourses on practical divinity, you did not forget "the first and great commandment." Reading books relating to the subject of your compositions, is, I think, advisable,* as it leads you to enter thoroughly into that subject, and to treasure up a stock of ideas upon particular topics, which will be of great use to you in future life.

It is of very great importance to have a clear, concise definition ready to give upon any subject that occurs: v. g. repentance, faith, justice, humility, patience, &c. A person may well understand the nature of each virtue, and what it comprehends, and yet be at a loss plainly and briefly to define it. But a minister ought to do this in order to give his hearers clear ideas. When I have finished a sermon, upon asking myself what I meant by a leading word or phrase, I have sometimes found that I had not so clear an idea, at least had not expressed it in so precise and short a manner, as I should. Perhaps it will be worth your while to make a collection of definitions of every virtue, theological doctrine and term, and frequently to review them, to imprint them on your memory. My catechism, and most ethical writers, will furnish you with some, and your divinity lectures with others.

It will be of service to you also, to get a number of synonymous words familiar to your mind, that in prayer or preaching the same word may not too often occur: v. g. patience, submission, resignation,—righteous, pious, holy, &c. &c. Such a variety in your language will be agreeable, whereas sameness will become tedious to the more judicious hearers.

I am glad to hear of your scheme for encouraging a religious society among the young people. I hope it will be easily effected. as they have been accustomed to it in time past. It will be proper to introduce the design with two or three discourses upon the subject, on such texts as 1 Sam. xxiii. 16; Mal. iii. 16; Heb. iii. 13. It may be sometimes useful to point out to your hearers

* With all due deference, it is queried whether it be advisable for a young minister to read on the subject on which he is going immediately to compose, as it may either embarrass him, or tempt him to plagiarism.

how they may and ought to be helpers with you in promoting the interest of religion; and how even the women may be so. See Phil. iv. 3, with Doddridge's note on the place, and 3 John 5, 8.

I must leave you to form your own sentiments of ordination. I never conceived of it in any other light than as a solemn recommendation of a minister to the grace of God, upon his undertaking the pastoral work;* not conferring any gift or any authority. I should be sorry to have it dropped among us, as it is a rational and scriptural act, considered in this light, and I have not yet met with any person who had that superstitious idea of it which some ministers suppose many to have. It is proper that this act should be done plebe præsente, to remind both pastors and people of their mutual duty. As to a particular confession of faith, that I must leave to yourself and the people. But I think it would be of advantage, on such a public occasion, to make a short answer to these questions: "Why are you a Christian?—Why a Protestant dissenter?—Why a minister?—and What are your purposes and views in undertaking and prosecuting the ministry?" Imposition of hands is of little or no consequence; but having been an ancient form of benediction, where no spiritual gifts were conferred, nor any authority given, it may still be used as a circumstance of natural decency, and an opportunity may be taken, either by the ordained or one of the ordainers, to inform the auditory in what light you consider that ceremony.

Yet, for my part, I must freely say, that the little seriousness and zeal which the ministers in the present day show, and the little respect with which dissenters in general treat their ministers, is, in my opinion, in a great measure owing to the want of that great solemnity with which ordinations were performed by our fathers. This brings in so many lay intruders and exhorters as do great mischief in our churches. These evils began when the ancient solemnity of ordination was laid aside, and they have increased as an irreverent entrance on the most solemn work in the world hath increased. It is very remarkable that your country, which was, even within my remembrance, most strict in all the rules of classical meetings and ordinations, and had scarcely a lay-preacher in it, except two or three baptists, is now beginning to swarm with them.

I cannot agree with you, that administering the sacraments is the easiest and least important part of our office. I always considered them as most important, and found it more difficult to administer them, as they should be, than to preach. If any parts of our work be more difficult than the rest, it must be

* May not ordination have another useful effect, viz. as a joint testimony from a number of respectable ministers, that they acknowledge the ordained as a brother, and agree to give him their countenance?

these; because they comprehend every other. At least, of this I am thoroughly persuaded, that it requires a great deal of pains with a minister's own heart to get it into such a frame for the administration of them (especially the Lord's supper) as is necessary or desirable, if he would spread a flame of gratitude and devotion through the hearts of those that join with him. The superficial and trifling manner in which many prepare for these ordinances (if it may be called preparation) and in which they are administered, has been greatly prejudicial to the interest of religion. I am sorry to hear of the death of useful ministers, and the imprudence of others.

Let me know whether you have Whitby on the New Testament, King's Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church, [and several others.] If not, I may probably supply you with them.

I shall be glad to see you here, if Providence prolongs our lives. It may be subservient to your health to take a journey in the summer; but winter journeys, and indeed all that are unnecessary and expensive, it will be most prudent to avoid. I pray God to increase your strength and furniture for your work, and that, with increasing knowledge, there may be increasing humility and seriousness. I can hardly wish you any thing further than that you may resemble your most excellent predecessor, who had few equals in every part of his office and character. Such an amiable mixture of cheerfulness and gravity; such a deep seriousness in speaking of religion; his discourses so plain and yet so judicious, so rational and yet so evangelical. Did you ever inquire of his widow for the charge he delivered at Mr. Meanly's ordination? I could wish you to read and digest it.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER XIX.

January 27, 1773.

Dear Sir,—I should have written to you some time ago, but have been for some weeks disabled by the return of a painful and depressing complaint. This hath thrown me into arrears with several of my correspondents, but I hope soon to be out of their debt.

I am glad Whitby was acceptable to you. His general prefaces, and some dissertations interspersed in his work, are very excellent and useful, and deserve a serious attention. In his old age he saw reason to change his sentiments on the doctrine of the Trinity, and publish what he called his Last Thoughts, espousing and defending what is commonly called Arianism. It is written with as much strength of judgment and liveliness

as any of his former pieces, and gives me a high opinion of his integrity. But you will not pin your faith upon any commentators, but consider them only as helps, and judge of their interpretations for yourself, by a careful perusal of the infallible oracles.

Critical lectures on the New Testament are an important part of academical education. We had generally one lecture in a week at Northampton, besides the exposition in the family, morning and evening; and the notes to the Family Expositor were contained in these lectures. I presume the reason why "Dr. Ashworth goes over the epistles with peculiar care" is that he considers them as very important though difficult parts of the New Testament. I should be astonished at the opinion of some divines, who make light of the epistles, did I not plainly perceive why they do so. It seems probable they cannot rightly reconcile many things in them with their favourite notions. And indeed I do not see how it is possible for a person who denies the atonement or proper sacrifice of Christ, and the necessity of the Spirit's influence for conversion, sanctification, and comfort, to give any rational and just interpretation of many passages in the epistles. It is not the difficulty of understanding them which leads them to these sentiments; for there are, at least to me, equal if not greater difficulties in the evangelists, especially in some parts of St. John's gospel.

Many of our modern divines forget what a powerful influence the credenda have upon the agenda, and that all the doctrines of the New Testament are "doctrines according to godliness." There is not one article in all our religion that is matter of mere speculation, or that entertains the mind with dry and empty notions, that have no influence on our will and affections. There is not a single discovery in Christianity but what hath its moral tendency and practical purpose. Pray attend to this thought; consider it closely, and digest it well; and observe if the apostles do not inculcate the several virtues by arguments taken from the peculiar doctrines and discoveries of Christianity, and whether any arguments strike the mind in a more forcible light than these, or have in fact been equally useful in promoting the practice of duty.

The scheme of exalting the evangelists above the epistles was first begun by Thomas Chubb, of Salisbury, in a tract which he styled the True Gospel of Christ; and then he went on writing many weak and infamous tracts against Christianity, and even virtue (no great recommendation of his principle, methinks). He hath been too much followed by many divines, though Hallett, of Exeter, and several other learned men, exposed the fallacy and absurdity of his reasoning. St. John wrote epistles as well as a gospel; and setting aside a plenary inspiration, so learned a man as Paul, and one who was converted

in so extraordinary a manner, was certainly a good judge of the design of Christianity and the doctrines of Christ. It is strange that any one should make this distinction [between the gospels and the epistles] who believes our Lord's divine mission, and that he had "the Spirit without measure." He promised to "lead his apostles into all truth;" that they should be "endowed with power from on high," that the Spirit "should take of the things of Christ and show them unto them," &c. &c. Now did our Lord fulfil these declarations or not? If he did, how absurd the notion [that the epistles which they wrote are of an inferior authority]. St. Paul asserts, in the strongest manner, his own inspiration; yea, his being superior to the other apostles in gifts; and shall we not take our account of Christianity from his writings?

I never knew a minister make this distinction but the reason was apparent: he was a Socinian; and finding little about the sacrifice and atonement of Christ in the evangelists (as there could not be much before our Lord's death), and finding that doctrine run through every page of all the epistles, he was willing to sink the character of the epistles, and lessen men's idea of them, in order to support his favourite notions; just as Luther denied the authority of James's epistle, because it clashed with his notion of justification.

The lessons of morality in the gospels are highly excellent; but are not those in the epistles equally so, and enforced by many strong and glorious arguments, which our Lord could not urge before his ascension to heaven? We are to take our ideas of Christianity, not from one part of the New Testament, but the whole of it; for every part hath equal authority. I write these things in haste and amidst interruptions, but I was willing to do what I could to guard you against a common error in this day. I beseech you to consider this matter carefully and seriously, for it is a most momentous concern. You remember the awful sanction with which the Revelation concludes, and how dangerous it is to "add to or take from" the sacred books.

I am glad to hear you are likely to have a book society among your people. It will be useful on many accounts, if you will endeavour to keep out trash and idle controversy, and get such books as are at once entertaining and instructive. You will find this among other advantages, that it will give you an opportunity, when you visit families who are members of the society, to ask them what books they have lately had, and so you will naturally introduce some useful discourse, and direct them to proper lessons to be learnt from what they have been reading, or point out particular passages of the books that may be peculiarly worth their attention.

You are much better where you are than you would be at C——, or almost any other place that I know. Your congre-

gation stands high in my esteem, from what I have heard of them from their late pastor. And I hope no worldly views will draw you from them, especially as they value your labours; and you have fewer difficulties than you would have in most other places. Pray think seriously of ordination. I cannot be with you in body, but will be in spirit; and I trust the great Head of the church will be with you, and make your work comfortable and prosperous.

You have probably seen Mr. Fownes's excellent tract on Toleration. It hath met with great acceptance in the world, and a second edition is now going to the press. I want to know if you have got Tomkins's book entitled Jesus Christ the Mediator, &c., if not I will send you one. Have you a Greek Testament with the various readings? I have one at your service.

This damp weather has been very unfavourable to my health. I can do very little, being mostly confined to my couch. I wish my circumstances may be seriously considered by my younger brethren as a call and motive to be diligent in their studies and labours while they have health and strength; as uncomfortable and useless days may soon come upon them. And the thought should likewise lead them to all good economy. I pray God to continue your health, to give you a clearer and fuller knowledge of the excellency and glory of Christianity, and make your labours very prosperous. I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and servant.

I hope you are doing what you can to promote religion in the family where you board, especially on a Lord's day.

LETTER XX.

Feb. 23, 1774.

Dear Sir,—I am very glad that you go on cheerfully and comfortably in your work and that both your reading and religious societies give you pleasure. I doubt not but you will encourage each. While you are conversing with books of literature, I hope you will endeavour daily to read some commentators, and some practical divinity, to increase your ministerial furniture, and to improve your temper and conduct as a Christian. It is no uncommon thing for persons to read a great many valuable books, and make considerable advances in science, and yet neglect the science of devotion and morals, and the cultivation of the heart, with that attention and pains which are necessary to keep up a spirit of serious piety, and a warmth of holy zeal.

I congratulate you on the legacy left you; not so much on account of its value, as its evidence that your behaviour hath been honourable, becoming your sacred function. I hope you

will save this money, and make it the foundation of an accumulating fund for your future supplies and exigencies.

I am sorry you should think of removing Mr. * *. Though he is not very agreeably fixed, yet he is in an important useful station, and hath great encouragement in his ministry. You know how difficult it is to have such a place supplied as he is now in, and how few dissenting ministers there are in that country. But perhaps you had more than one selfish reason for desiring his settlement in your neighbourhood. I hear he has a very agreeable sister, whose charms have attracted your attention and perhaps affection too. I am a perfect stranger to the whole family, but if my information be right, that she hath little or no fortune, I cannot think that such an alliance will be prudent, especially as you have so little of your own, and perhaps are not remarkable for economy. There is an old rule which I remember in the grammar, that deserves your attention: "Duo negativa plerumque vehementiùs negant." You will therefore think, and think again, before you pursue such a scheme; especially as you may reasonably expect, considering your education, profession, and station, that you may meet with a wife with a handsome fortune, as many other dissenting ministers have done.*

I am astonished at the account you give me of your dispute with a clergyman about Zech. xii. 10. Grotius indeed interprets it in the sense he doth, but without any appearance of reason. It plainly refers to the future conversion of the Jews. The original word never signifies any thing but being pierced through, or mortally wounded. The application of it to Jesus Christ, by John, both in his gospel and the Revelation, is a further proof of this. But you will see the prophetic application of it to the Messiah fully vindicated in Bishop Chandler's Answer to Collins, or in any of the other writers against him, and in the commentators.

I am glad my little book [on Zeal] was agreeable to you. I hope it will be useful to many. I can do very little myself, and therefore should be glad to quicken others, especially my brethren, many of whom need it too much. It is very grievous to see so many ministers of good abilities, and, upon the whole, of serious spirits, and who are under so many obligations and engagements to diligence in their pastoral work, yet so negligent in it. I could wish to revive something of that spirit which appeared so eminently and beautifully in your predecessors, Pendlebury, Rochel, and Bradock. I hope you will never give any of your aged hearers reason to complain that it is not with them as it was in years past, but will support the high credit

* Though the maxim upon which Mr. Orton proceeded, in the above caution and advice, be a very prudent one, he was mistaken in the application of it in this case, as appears from the following letter. By "a handsome fortune" he did not mean a large one (for few persons more discountenanced a worldly disposition than he did) but a bare competency, to preserve a minister from difficulties and enable him to do good.

which the ministry at Bury hath long been in, for seriousness, zeal, and usefulness.

Mr. A. is leaving H——, and is going to a stiff Independent congregation in London. I fear he will neither be so comfortable nor so useful as he long hath been. I hear Mr.—— from * * is going to assist Mr. * *. One of the most sensible of that congregation told me, that he is a judicious preacher and a good speaker, but does not seem to have that serious spirit which he thought a minister should have. And indeed that hath been the general complaint, among pious people, of the students from * * *. But I must break off, as I find the return of great pains. I have just been reading the life of a pious minister, to whom the writer of it says, that remark of the poet might be justly applied, "Nill molitur ineptè." Keep that maxim always in view. Carefully distinguish between το εργον and παρεργον. May God crown all your studies and labours with success, and may you "increase while I decrease!" I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

May 2, 1774.

Dear Sir,—I am glad to receive such an account of Miss * *'s temper, character, and circumstances. This obviates the main, indeed the only objection which I could have to the proposed alliance. I am particularly pleased with the frankness and good sense which the old lady shows in her letter to you; which gives me a pleasing hope that she hath educated her daughter well, and endeavoured successfully to form her to a temper like her own.

Your scheme of keeping "a female boarding-school," may answer very well, if your intended wife has health and spirits to manage that, together with the natural and expected cares of a family. But allow me to say, I am a little in doubt about the propriety and convenience of your sister being concerned with her. In all the compass of my acquaintance and observation, I never knew but one instance in which a husband's sister was perfectly harmonious with his wife, when they lived together; and that instance hath this exception,—that only one of his sisters, out of four, could live comfortably with her, though both the gentleman and his wife were sweet tempered and condescending above most other persons. And you can easily conceive what disagreeable consequences will follow, should there be any difference, or even shyness and coldness between your wife and your sister. It seems therefore best (if such a union be desirable) only to invite her at first as a guest; by which you may judge how their tempers will suit.

You are to consider yourself as minister of Bury, and devoted to the service of that people; who on account of their number, and their respect for you, will demand and deserve that your whole time be employed for their good. You will therefore undertake no part of the care or management of the school yourself; though you may without inconvenience, at some leisure times, instruct the young ladies in reading, in the English language, geography, or some other parts of useful knowledge, which will be a recommendation of your school.

I must entreat you to set out in life, under this new relation, with the greatest frugality and economy. Most young persons, and especially most young ministers, fail egregiously here, and thereby bring difficulty and reproach upon themselves, and too often entail distress upon their families. Dress and live as plain as possible, consistent with decency, and a regard to your ministerial character. I can assure you, from long experience and observation, that your people will, in this case, have a better opinion of you and your wife; will contribute more cheerfully to your support, and pay a greater regard to your public and private admonitions.

When your friends come to see you, entertain them cheerfully, but in the most cheap and prudent manner imaginable. Those of them who are your superiors in fortune will be pleased with this; as I have always observed that those who have been educated in plenty, and are in affluent circumstances, are best pleased with a plain entertainment. I think it should be a rule with you, not to treat any of them with foreign wine, but content yourself with home manufacture. And if any of them should suggest, or appear to think, that they are not treated with sufficient respect, discard such persons; erase them ex albo amicorum, and let them not be again invited to your house. A minister's wife should dress rather below than above her rank; and thus she will secure respect, if she doth not by any haughty airs, and a supercilious distant way of treating the common people, forfeit it.

Do not begin with practising or encouraging much visiting. Your own time ought to be most precious to you, and your wife's school will be a sufficient apology, to all sensible people, for her being much at home. What time she can spare from her scholars, let her devote to domestic business, a little reading, and a good deal of walking for her health, which her confinement in her school will render peculiarly necessary.

I hope I need not caution either her or you against mean ungenerous methods to draw girls to yours from any other school, or saying any thing reflecting upon the method of education, temper, or conduct, of other governesses. You will be careful to treat all the children alike, and let no distinction or preeminence be shown to those who may be the daughters of

your particular friends, or any of your people. And it may be best to have no parlour boarders, but set them all upon a level.

You will be sure never to run in debt, but pay weekly as you go, and keep an exact account of every penny you expend, which will furnish out many prudential hints for future economy and management. There are many little things of this nature which will require some attention, as much of a person's reputation and success depends upon it, but which young people are apt to neglect, till experience (the instructor and mistress of fools) teaches them.* There are many other prudential maxims which your own and your wife's good sense will suggest, as to your setting out, manner of living, and behaviour to your scholars. I heartily wish you success in this and every other worthy and benevolent design.

Your account of Dr. B——'s death is very instructive and affecting. It gave me peculiar pleasure and matter of thankfulness, that any thing I wrote to my nephew, when at Warrington, was serviceable to him. As I wrote very freely and faithfully to him, I little thought he would have communicated it to any one else, though there were no prudential reasons why he should not. I have considered your information on this subject, and I hope you will consider it also, as very encouraging and very instructive. It gives one great encouragement to hope and believe that, by a serious letter to, or conversation with, one relation or friend, we may do good to others, to whom we had not the least expectation or idea that what we wrote or spoke would ever be known. I have heard of other persons who have read or heard some of my letters or manuscript sermons, who seemed to me most unlikely to have known any thing of them, to whom I hope they have not been wholly useless.

[Such instances of usefulness Providence sometimes discovers, to direct and encourage us to introduce such serious and friendly hints to our correspondents, as may do them and others good; which we should study to do in the most easy familiar manner, and in some cases without the appearance of any particular design.†]

Poor Billingsley‡ has been very ill of a fever, which I fear has settled on his lungs. Dr. J. thinks his case hazardous, and fears he most not go on preaching. In that case I know not what he will do, as he has no relations to support him, and nothing before-hand to keep him from being destitute. A fresh admonition to young ministers to be prudent and frugal.§ I find

* The above prudential maxims will, with equal propriety, be adopted by those ministers who keep schools for boys.

† The above passage the editor has taken the liberty to re-compose, as it was not expressed with the writer's usual perspicuity.

‡ The person to whom some subsequent letters were addressed, and a fellow student with Mr. Hughes.

§ So this worthy young man was; for it appears from another letter, that at the time of his death he had saved forty pounds, out of a scanty income.

myself very weak and unfit for any business—affected by every blast of wind. But I desire humbly and cheerfully to submit to that providence which hath shut me up from active services and usefulness. Perhaps God designs to quicken my brethren to work while they can, by seeing how weak and useless they may become, even before the days of old age. May I be an example of patience! Be assured you have my best wishes and prayers in every circumstance, condition, and relation, into which you may be brought. I am, dear Sir, &c.

P. S. You were monstrously imposed upon in your writing-paper. If you don't buy goods at a better hand, when you become the head of a large family, you will soon be a bankrupt. There is no date to your letter. Perhaps it is best to begin with the date, lest it be forgotten; which sometimes is an inconvenience.

LETTER XXII.

March 23, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I rejoice with you in the encouragement you have in regard to your school. Your terms are pretty high, but I hope your care will be proportionate, and that the parents will have reason to think their money well expended. But three of your morning hours seem rather too much to be allotted to your scholars. I fear it will be a hinderance to your private reading and study. As in so large and dispersed a congregation as yours, much of your time will be engaged in visiting them, your mornings should be principally devoted to improve your own mind, and increase your furniture for ministerial usefulness. It is very wrong for young divines to live, as it were, upon the quick stock, and not to be daily adding to their store of ideas, their critical learning, and other important branches of science. Remember your ministry is the το εργον, therefore all your time should be devoted to that, as far as is consistent with the common duties of the head of a family.

There is nothing more injurious to a young minister's reputation and usefulness than to get into a loose careless way of composing. Yet this he will do, except he applies himself closely to reading divinity, especially practical writers, and prepares his materials diligently before he begins to compose; and also, except he begins in good time in the week, and don't defer it till the close; which is on every account bad policy. No popular talents will secure a minister's reputation among sensible people, except he be increasing his fund of knowledge continually, and be able, like "a good householder, to bring out of his treasure things new and old." The habit of careful and elaborate composing in younger days will tend to render his work much more easy and pleasant in the advance of life.

But a caution may be necessary, that you do not apply so closely either to study, or to the care of your pupils, as to neglect pastoral visits to your people, and proper relaxation and exercise for your own health. Young people, in the vigour of their days and spirits, do not sufficiently attend to this latter circumstance, though students above all men should attend to it, because close "study is" not only a present "weariness of the flesh," but may be a great injury to it through future life.

Mr. H * * * looked very well, and preached very well, without "a black gown." I presume there is no more virtue in a gown than in a cloak or common coat. But (as I remember Mr. Mottershead once said to a pert young divine, who smiled at his putting on a band to preach a country lecture), "any little thing which will set off a sermon, and recommend it to the regard of the hearers, becomes a very important thing."

I hope it is a gown without pudding sleeves, and that no cassock and surcingle are added to it; for as these are marks of certain degrees in an university, it seems ridiculous for those who have never rubbed their edges against a college wall, to ape the dress of graduates. But a common loose gown has been frequent among dissenting ministers. Above forty years ago my tutor, Dr. Owen of Warrington, wore one every sabbath, though he never appeared in it when he went into the town. I wish my good friend at Bury, and all our brethren, may be clothed with knowledge and righteousness, and may (like our great master) put on "zeal as a cloak,"* and then their dress is a very small matter. They will be much esteemed and very useful, however the outward man is dressed; but otherwise, if they were arrayed as fine as the Jewish high-priest, or the Roman pontiff, they are but beggarly contemptible creatures.

I had a letter lately from Dr. Ashworth, in which he gives me a mournful account indeed of himself and his children. He is far gone in a dropsy, and there is little hope of his recovery. To whom the care of the academy will be committed I know not. Indeed I can scarcely guess at any proper person to conduct it.

I lately heard from Mr. B——ley, who having gone on with his public work very comfortably for some time, is now sunk into his usual low way, with some consumptive symptoms. He writes in a very melancholy strain. Mr. * * is much in the same state; but it seems, from those who live near him, to be more the effect of indolence than real disease. The congregation is uneasy and sinking under him. I wish some other place could be thought of for him, as he is really a sensible and useful preacher. Perhaps a removal might rouse him, and engage him to a closer application to his ministerial duty. Mr. * * * goes on well at * * *, and meets with great encouragement from his people. I

* Isaiah lix. 17.

rejoice in this, and hope it will be a motive to him to be diligent in his studies, and not ramble abroad; which is the sin that seems easily to beset him, and indeed most young ministers in the present day.

Mr. Cardale, of Eversham, died lately. He had been dissenting minister there about forty years. You have probably read or heard of some of his books. He hath written several pieces in favour of Socinianism, in a long and tedious way; but full of good sense and good temper. He had, I suppose, about twenty people to hear him at the last, having ruined a fine congregation by his very learned, critical, and dry discourses, an extreme heaviness in the pulpit, and an almost total neglect of pastoral visits and private inspection.

It grieves me to hear of a growing spirit of levity and dissipation among the people at * * *, which is very unfavourable to the interest of religion and the comfort of a minister, and which every good minister should exert all his powers to restrain; though unhappily some of our [divines] have set themselves to plead for such a compliance with fashionable amusements, as tends to the utter ruin of our interest, and I fear will be greatly injurious to the best interests of particular persons. Strange that all our learned and wise fathers should be so wretchedly mistaken, in labouring to keep their people from "the course of this world," and the love of pleasure and dissipation. But we foolishly throw off our fathers' real excellencies, with their old fashions and peculiar sentiments, and have not either judgment to see the difference between them, or not resolution enough to withstand the customs and fashions of the age.

I have not seen more of Mr. Palmer's book than a few of the first numbers in the bookseller's shop. I subscribed for it, but chose to wait till the first volume is published.* I hope it will be a very acceptable book, as I know of none more proper and useful to put into the hands of our dissenters, especially of the rising generation, who know little of the principles, sufferings, and extraordinary behaviour of their ancestors. Indeed such a work as this is an honour to Christianity and human nature, as well as to dissenting principles.

I presume you have had an account of what the committee of our brethren in London have been doing, relating to our petition to parliament for relief in the case of subscription. They are divided into three parties; those who are for subscription; those who are against any declaration; and a third sort who are against any application to parliament at all, being, as they say, satisfied as they are, and content with the present connivance.

I desire to be thankful for the liberty we have. Though I wish for a repeal of every penal law against the dissenters, I

* The Nonconformist's Memorial. Mr. Orton afterwards altered his mind, and took the numbers as they were printed, and sent his remarks on them to the editor.

would be found amongst the peaceable and quiet of the land. Things look dark. I am sorry for you who are entering on life, and for posterity; but I have just done with the world. While I live I will endeavour to do it all the good I can, but I will give myself as little trouble about other things as possible.

I have little to say of myself. I shall be glad to hear from you. I do not expect you should think of every thing when you write; but as I have long found that correspondence with my friends is pleasing and improving, and the only way of conversing with most of them, I endeavour to make it as agreeable to them as I can. I generally keep their letters near me till they are answered, and make memorandums upon the back, of any circumstances or occurrences which I think may be agreeable or useful for them to know. I never trust my memory and invention at the time, for I am not sufficiently master of either. I pray God to continue your health and smile upon your labours, both in public and private, to do good. Remember, nothing is to be done in religion, much less in the ministry, with a slack hand.

I am, yours affectionately.

LETTER XXIII.

March 25, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I am glad to hear you had a comfortable journey [to London], an agreeable interview with your friends, and a safe return. As I presume your journey has been pretty expensive, you will now set about retrenching and saving, and so make provision for futurity. Remember those texts,— "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself;" — "A good man guideth his affairs with discretion," &c.—I have "the pamphlet relating to the debate between Dr. Fordyce and Mr. Toller." They are both warm, but I think it is plain that the latter was ill used. These differences hurt our credit and interest. I do not wonder our cause sinks in London, considering the general increase of luxury and extravagance; the want of greater plainness, seriousness, and faithfulness in our ministers; and the unhappy party squabbles, both religious and political, which have long been found among the dissenters.

Mr. Jones, of Peckham, I have known from a child, as he was born at Northampton. His book, which he gave you, I have read. It is a serious useful piece, but wants a little more of what the French call "unction."*

I am exceedingly glad to hear "that Mr. Lindsey's chapel was

* On Friendship with God. It has more of that "unction" than some would expect. The author was many years at Cambridge, and after that at Crosby Square, London. He died a few years ago, and was succeeded by Mr Collyer

so well filled," especially in the summer season, when the London congregations are generally thin. I have had two or three letters from that worthy and excellent man, whom I much esteem, and hold in the same veneration as I should have done one of the ejected and silenced ministers a century ago. I have nothing to do with his particular sentiments; but his good sense, learning, piety, integrity, and desire to do good, demand the esteem and affection of every consistent Christian, especially every consistent dissenter. Mr. J., the baptist minister of W., has sent me a tract which he wrote against Lindsey's Apology, which is a weak and ill-natured performance. But some people who have no qualification for it, love to write against a man of an established character and great credit, as they think it doth them honour among their own party to attack a champion of the opposite party. Is it likely that any of his congregation should be corrupted by Mr. Lindsey's book? I wish he had more of that confessor's spirit, and then he may be as orthodox as he pleases.

Your account of the death of Mr. John Owen, of Warrington, much affects me. I was a pupil to his father in the year 1733, and till Midsummer, 1734, and was very comfortable in the regard shown me by that family. He was a man of good sense and learning, and a very judicious, though a heavy preacher. I presume he must be near eighty.

The death of Dr. Ashworth, though it has been long expected, has been a very painful event to me. Mr. Robins preached his funeral sermon last Lord's day to a great auditory, from those words, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Coward's trustees, all the neighbouring ministers, and many in this and other neighbourhoods, think that no person is more proper to fill up this vacancy than Mr. Robins, especially as he is exceedingly acceptable to the congregation at Daventry. He hath been strongly urged to take up the prophet's mantle, but he has an unconquerable diffidence of his own abilities. I wish the many applications he hath received from ministers of all sentiments and denominations may overcome it. If he absolutely refuses, I know not who will be thought of. I pray God to direct in this very important concern.

The proposal of your congregation relating to the salary, I cannot advise you to comply with. I think you had better run the risk, and take what the people choose to give. To stipulate for a certain sum is, I think, very impolitic in ministers, excepting those who are conscious that they are not likely to support the interest and secure the continuance of their people's regard. I have known instances where a stated salary hath been offered, accepted, and regularly kept to, and yet the minister hath suffered by it. Mr. Fawcett was promised eighty pounds a year when he came hither. He hath no more statedly now, though the congregation is larger, and at least ten times richer by the

increase of their trade and manufacture. Many of the most wealthy people pay only for their seats, and pay very little too. A congregation have naturally a better opinion of a minister when he trusts to their generosity, and modestly depends on his own diligence and care to secure and increase their regard to him. Persons who love him, and especially those who find benefit by his ministry, will increase their subscription, especially if their fortunes increase; and it is much more pleasant and agreeable to leave the people an opportunity to show their gratitude and respect in this way.

There is nothing lost by a generous confidence in those about us, especially in the case of a minister. I remember two or three instances at Shrewsbury, of persons who, out of gratitude for their minister's attention and visits to them, and prayers for them, during their own or their family's long sickness, at the next season of collecting increased their subscription, and said they did it for this reason. This is an encouragement to a minister, it is a substantial proof of their genuine esteem, and that they think at least that he has done his duty. I should abhor any thing in this case that looked like dealing with a congregation, or trafficking in spiritual concerns. A minister that behaves well, and doth his duty faithfully and affectionately, will find his salary increased in the most honourable and comfortable manner,* and he will have this peculiar pleasure, to reflect, that what his people do they do cheerfully. Besides, if any of the congregation do less than they ought, the collectors may decently and properly stir them up to do more, which they cannot do if the stipulated salary be raised. I acted upon this principle at Shrewsbury, and I never saw reason to repent of it.† Whereas I have known many ministers who, having had a certain salary, have found many and great inconveniences from it, and had much less respect and affection shown them by the people, though they have kept exactly to their bargain.

As to the question you propose, relating to "baptizing of illegitimate children," I do not well understand what you mean by that phrase. If you mean "children begotten before lawful marriage, but born after it," the case seems very clear. One design of baptism is to obtain a proper security and engagement that the child shall be educated in the principles of the Christian religion, and taught the doctrines and laws of our divine Lawgiver. The parents of such a child will naturally expect this child to be baptized; and it is, in the eye of the law of England, *legitimate* (if I understand the law right), being

* This is far from being universally the case. There are few ministers who can live upon their income from the people, even where many of them are in affluence. Some individuals have been known to gain in one day more than their minister's yearly income.

† Mr. Orton had a good fortune of his own, and no family. Though what he has said certainly has weight, much may be offered on the other side.

born in lawful matrimony. But then I think they ought to declare their repentance for their former criminal conduct, and to declare it publicly when the child is baptized. If they appear to be humble and penitent, and willing to make such a declaration, I should make no scruple of baptizing the child. Only one instance of that kind occurred in the course of my ministry (and that was not at Shrewsbury), in which the parents readily acknowledged their guilt, with the proper marks of contrition, before several witnesses, whom I engaged to be present, thinking that a prudent step, in order to avoid any reflections upon my own character.

With regard to baptizing the child of an *unmarried* woman, the case seems very different, as the father of the child would scarcely appear. And what security would his promise be with regard to the Christian education of the child, who may live at a distance, and have no further connexion with the mother? Or what evidence of repentance or religion can such a person give, except he will marry the woman whom he has seduced and injured? But if a woman who hath such a child was not a vicious person before, but was artfully deluded by a villain who would not marry her, and she appeared humble and penitent, and would promise for the Christian education of the child, I think I should make no scruple of baptizing it; only I would take care to have two or three respectable persons as witnesses of the transaction. But if she had a bad character before, or seemed impenitent still, and thoughtless about her guilt, I would by no means baptize her child, but turn her over to the parish priest. For what ground have you to expect the Christian education of the child of such a mother? Besides, it would occasion a reflection upon you, and the church over which you preside. It is, however, a case which seldom happens among dissenters, and you know the church makes no scruple upon this head.

If I remember right, there is something relating to this point (i. e., a case nearly resembling it, the baptizing of *foundling* children) in one of the last pages of Mr. Towgood's tract, entitled the Baptism of Infants a Reasonable Service; the best piece, in a little compass, upon this subject. I can say nothing further; you must judge in every particular case of this kind for yourself; only you will recollect how far the persons who solicit to have a child baptized in this circumstance, may be led to think themselves innocent, or not very criminal, by the minister's consenting to do it; and what effect it may have upon the minds of others, in leading them to think lightly of fornication.

Our townsmen are very fearful of losing Dr. Adams,* he being

* The learned and worthy vicar of St. Chad's parish, with whom Mr. Orton was intimate.

invited to become master of Pembroke College in Oxford; a place of about £600 a year, and comparatively nothing to do. He is deliberating about it; but I think he is too old to enter on such a new scene, and shall be sorry for my townsmen if he leaves them. Mr. * * * and Mr. * * * and Mr. * * * are gaping after St. Chad's if he quits, but who will have the most interest with the chancellor I know not.

I am better and worse as usual, yet never actively well. I wonder that I am alive, when Dr. Ashworth, and so many other active and useful men, younger than myself, are removed. But I suppose that I need more hewing and polishing before I shall be fit for a better state. God grant that I may be found so after all! May you be enabled to be diligent in your business, and labour abundantly to fulfil your ministry, and have great encouragement and success in it!

I am, dear Sir, &c.

P.S. Pray can you tell me what a friend of mine meant, who informed me that, as he was lately walking in Manchester, he met a Lancashire divine, who looked like a grave man, with a lady, who was most pompously dressed out, finer than any woman in the town? at which he expressed great astonishment.

LETTER XXIV.

Feb. 15, 1777.

Dear Sir,—It gives me pleasure to hear of the pains you are taking about your public prayers; which is of infinitely more importance than the generality of dissenting ministers suppose. Nothing will contribute more to their esteem and reputation among the people, or to their usefulness, than having a variety and suitableness in their public prayers and thanksgivings. It would likewise have a good influence upon their own spirits. This might easily be obtained if they would keep this thought in mind in their reading, especially of their bible, and devotional and practical pieces. Studying a proper variety in their secret and family worship, would also be a signal help to make their public prayers acceptable and useful.

Your objection to Saurin's Sermons is very just and hath great weight.* Some allowance must be made for him, considering that he preached to the politest and most judicious congregation perhaps in Europe; the church of the French refugees at the Hague. I wish Mr. Robinson had selected some sermons plainer in themselves, and more suited to the generality of readers. But the two last volumes will be of that sort. There is this excellence in Saurin's Sermons, on which account princi-

* Viz. their being too abstruse and metaphysical.

pally I commended them—that there is something in his applications so striking, and he comes so home to men's business and bosoms, that I think they could not have been heard without making some good and abiding impressions on every heart that was not callous. In this view I could wish our young ministers to imitate him. This the French call "unction." They have perhaps too much of it, and we have a great deal too little.

I will mention [what you desire] in my next letter to Mr.* * that is, if I don't forget; for my memory fails me very much. I soon forget what I read now, but remember a great many foolish things which I read in my younger days, and which I wish I could forget. Let this be a hint to you, not to meddle with foolish unprofitable books. Endeavour to store your memory with texts of scripture; plain, judicious definitions* of words, doctrines, virtues, vices, and every thing that you may have occasion to use in the course of your ministry.

If you can conveniently purchase it, I would recommend to you a book, lately published, price ten shillings and sixpence, Dr. Chandler's Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Thessalonians.† You will, I think, find it an admirable work, full of curious criticisms, well supported by quotations from the classics. There are also practical reflections and advices through the whole, which will be serviceable to you in your preparations for the pulpit. Perhaps you may borrow it, and enrich your interleaved bible with many extracts from it.

I have little to say of your friends in these parts. I never see, and seldom hear any thing of Mr. * *. Mr. S. F. goes on well in D——. Mr. Wood, of Dudley, and Mr. Wells are much esteemed by their respective flocks. They are serious diligent pastors. The latter hath lately set up some country lectures in farm-houses, which have been well attended, and several persons who have heard him there, frequently come to his meeting at Bromsgrove. His family increases, and I wish his benefice was better: but he has a prudent wife, and he himself is a good economist.‡ Mr. Robins has every encouragement at Daventry. His reputation among his brethren, flock, and pupils, is continually increasing.

Have you seen two volumes of Sermons by Mr. Sandercock, lately published by Mr. Cappe, of York? You will find them worth your reading. They are judicious and serious; and some of them are remarkably lively and pathetic. I could wish you to form a plan, with some of your brethren, for buying books of

* Mr. Orton once recommended to the editor a small volume containing such "definitions," on a variety of subjects, which appeared very judicious and useful; but not being now at hand, the title of it cannot be ascertained.

† Published by the Rev. Nathaniel White, the doctor's successor at the Old Jewry.

‡ Some years age, partly for want of liberal support, and partly from the threatening aspect of the times, he went to America, and has a good congregation and a farm, in the state of Vermont.

considerable price, as I have known some ministers near one another have done, each contributing equally to purchase a book, and when they had all read it they drew lots whose property it should be, every one having a right to borrow it afterwards, if he wanted to read or consult it again.

It gave me singular pleasure to hear of your sister's marriage. Assure her of my best wishes for her happiness. But give me leave, by your means, to be her counsellor, and very much, I think, her friend,—in advising her to set out with all the plainness and frugality in her dress, personal and family expences, that she possibly can. This will be most for her credit, and upon the whole for her comfort, and will tend to reconcile * * * the sooner to her. Young women of small fortunes, when they marry a person of superior circumstances, generally err in this particular; thinking they must make a figure, and do as his relations do; which is a disadvantage to the sex in general. Many worthy and substantial men are discouraged from marrying young women of no fortune, or small ones, whom in other respects they would choose, because they see so many in that relation, when their rank is raised, the most extravagant wives, as well as in other things taking more upon them than in decency, prudence, and I may add gratitude, they ought to do. I hope that in this and other instances you will study and increase in every branch of prudence. I have lately met with two passages which may deserve your serious consideration: one is in Lord Kaimes's Maxims and Advice, which is an excellent book; "A wise man will beware of excelling in trifles; he will be known by them at the expence of more valuable qualities; and he that makes others laugh will seldom make himself esteemed." The other is in a MS. of Dr. Doddridge: "In that company I allowed myself in some freedom and levity, which even my free temper would not easily digest, and by a foolish compliance with my company, I contradicted that gravity which I think a minister ought always to wear, even in his gayest hours."

I have few opportunities of doing good. I much lament that I have not better improved those I have had. Loss of time, neglect in my ministerial work, especially in not addressing more plainly the consciences of men (particularly those who, I had reason to fear, were sensual and careless, and had only a form of godliness), trifling in the secret exercises of devotion, and many other irregularities, now lie heavy upon my mind, and obscure my setting sun. I see more and more of the excellency of the gospel scheme, and the gracious provision it makes for the pardon and acceptance of humble penitents, without which I should sink into despair.

I have heard to-day from Shrewsbury. Mr. Gentleman, besides some school-boys, has two young men intended for the ministry (who will be a kind of half-bred divines), under his

care. do not much approve his scheme; but in the present state of our churches, such men may be very acceptable, and fill up some useful stations. They are principally supported by charity.* I wish this undertaking may not be too much for his health, together with his ministerial work, which is indeed (as almost that of every minister is) enough to employ all his powers of body and mind, if it be attended to and pursued as it ought to be. I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and brother.

LETTER XXV.†

May 3, 1777.

Dear Sir,—Your letter, like the letters of my other friends, and like this world and all things in it, contains a mixture of the agreeable and disagreeable. But God hath wisely and kindly "set prosperity and adversity one over against the other." And the longer we live in the world, the more shall we see of his wisdom and goodness in such an appointment. I congratulate you upon the increase of your family, and heartily wish this child may be a comfort to you and its mother, and a blessing to the church and world. But you will carry the hint, with which I begun this letter, into all your relative as well as personal concerns, and "rejoice as though you rejoiced not;" for children are uncertain comforts, and "the fashion of this world passeth away." One would think it was not very difficult, not to be over fond, and not to over love, when we are pleased, and are embracing the property of death, who will sooner or later irresistibly assert his claim. But experience shows the contrary, and all the aids of reason and religion should be called in to balance the workings of natural affection, when they begin to grow too strong, and lead us to forget that "all is vanity."

I am sorry to hear of your accident, and join with you in thankfulness to God that it was no worse. I will not say, "Why did you get behind your horse, or go so near him, as to be exposed to his kick?" but only entreat you to be more cautious for the future. Some good-natured horses will at times be vicious, as some good-tempered men and women will at times be troublesome and mischievous. I shall be glad to hear of your perfect recovery. Don't venture to use your leg much till you are sure you can do it with safety.

* This charity was raised by a few ministers in and near London, associated upon a plan of usefulness, agreeable to some hints suggested in the appendix to Dr. Ashworth's Funeral Sermon, on Luke x. 2. Under the patronage of this society, several of Mr. Gentleman's pupils at Shrewsbury proved acceptable and useful ministers, whom Mr. Orton found more reason to countenance than he at first expected.

† Part of this letter was lately inserted in the Theol. Bib. Mag.

The Account of America from the French, I hope to see soon. But I have little strength to read, and therefore confine myself chiefly to such books as suit my age and infirmity, and the near approach of death. In this view I have been reading again (I suppose for the sixth time at least) Steel on Old Age; which is well worth the perusal of young men, and especially young divines, to form them to a popular manner of address, and furnish them with many entertaining and instructive stories, to introduce into their sermons, which will render them peculiarly acceptable and useful to their hearers. This is the case of all this author's works.

I have not seen Dr. Blair's Sermons, but probably soon shall. I know by his Remarks upon Ossian, that he is a learned and ingenious man. I have just been reading Dr. Enfield's Biographical Sermons, and was much disappointed in them. I expected more life and spirit in the embellishing and illustrating the narration and the characters. They are pretty essays; but I expect no good from any discourses which do not strike men's hearts and consciences, as well as inform their judgments and please their imaginations. Surely most of the persons whose characters he has described were very different sort of preachers.

Mrs. D——'s Dialogue on Friendship has nothing extraordinary in the sentiment, and much wrong in the style; especially for a lady; confused and intricate for want of more connecting particles. Whatever refined ideas she may have of friendship, I fear she has no just sense of the nature, extent, and importance of relative duties: for I am informed she is a very bad wife, neglecting her husband and children, and sacrificing domestic comfort and happiness to taste. Be thankful that you have a wife who, instead of writing books and rambling to London, &c., is content to rule well her own house, and to take care of you and your domestic concerns. Such wives will make a better figure in another world than such as the lady I have just mentioned.

I lately finished reading Dr. Halifax's Sermons on the Prophecies relating to Popery, which are upon the whole sensible and judicious; though by implicitly following Mede, I think he has mistaken the meaning of the plan of prophecy in the Revelation. Is it not strange that, in a work of this kind, he should never so much as mention the name of Lowman? for though he should not approve his interpretation, the book is written with so much judgment, learning, and modesty, as rendered it deserving of notice. Is it not strange likewise that, though he passes high encomiums upon the bishops Warburton, Newton, Lowth, and especially Joseph Mede, he should content himself with styling Dr. Lardner, "the laborious Lardner?"—a title which might be applied to any of your weavers or coal carriers. But such is the force of bigotry in a divine, a learned man, and a

professor! There is one thing for which he is remarkable; namely the use of a great number of hard words, which those of his readers who occupy the place of the unlearned cannot understand. I will give you a specimen, as a caution to you to avoid them and others equally unintelligible— sedulously, depict, adumbrated, deflected, verisimilitude, elicit, excogitancy, impugn, reciprocation, &c. &c. Some Welsh words would be as intelligible to the bulk of our reading society. This has a show of learning, but it is easier to find out and use such words, than those that are more plain and intelligible, and the latter are generally more proper and elegant.

Archdeacon Blackburn's late Charge to his Clergy is worth your careful and repeated perusal. I desire you would purchase and read, and let your wife and your people read, a small piece entitled a Guide to Domestic Happiness. I have a low opinion of the "dissenters in Dublin;" I should be sorry if they take Mr. S— away from * *. I had a letter lately from Mr. C—— of Liverpool, but he says nothing of a "renewed division there." I hope it is not upon his account. Our dissenters know not what they would have. They have mostly lost the piety and zeal of their fathers, and seem to study nothing but amusement and entertainment on a Lord's day.

I think there is no prospect of Mr. B——'s doing any thing here [in collecting for his new meeting]. Indeed no minister should go so far from home on such occasions, especially from a neighbourhood where there are so many dissenters. We had a collection, not a fortnight ago, for a meeting-house for some troublesome factious people at C——. We have had an application also from Northampton.*

Mr. G—— brought me no material news from Shrewsbury, but that the baptists are exerting all their zeal to make proselytes, and the controversy is still going on between them and the vicar of St. Alkmond [Mr. De Courcy]. It is a great pleasure to me to reflect, that I was always upon good terms with the baptists, and did what I could to serve them.

Your respect in calling your son after my name, I take very kindly, though had I been consulted I should have desired him to be called John or Thomas, for it is making too much of so inconsiderable a man as I am. May his name be written in the Lamb's book of life, among his faithful servants and soldiers; then it will shine with honour, while all earthly names and distinctions are buried in the dust. Probably I may trouble the world with another publication soon, and show my friends that I am not quite idle: I hope not quite useless. But I am so

* The practice of going all over the kingdom begging for meeting-houses is become a serious and growing evil. It is much to be wished that some effectual means could be adopted to prevent the necessity for it. A good plan was proposed a few months ago in the Evangelical Magazine.

weak that I must daily think of departing, May it prove a departure to "be with Christ which is far better!" And may you long continue to serve the church and the world when I am silent in the dust!

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

June 11, 1777.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—The many accounts I have received from my brethren and friends, of your ill state of health, and the discomposure of your spirits, have given me great concern. I sincerely and most tenderly pity you. I daily spread your case before the Father of mercies, and cannot satisfy myself without sending you a line to express my best wishes for your restoration to health and usefulness.

Having had some experience of the nature, tendency, and misery of such disorders, I am the better able to condole with you; and you will allow me, with the freedom and faithfulness of a friend, to suggest to you what I have found by long experience, hath been most serviceable to myself, and by observation, the most so to others in like circumstances.

What medicines may be proper in your situation I cannot be a competent judge; I should suppose very little if any will have much significancy. The grand means are air, exercise, and the society of your friends. Nothing is worse for you (I speak by long experience) than sitting alone, and indulging melancholy thoughts. Much thinking, in such cases, always occasions a great reluctance to motion and exercises, but nothing is more salutary and necessary: nothing else will produce any good effect. I know it requires much self-denial, and a great struggle with one's self, to exert so much resolution as to take it and persevere in it. Ten thousand fears and apprehensions will discourage, and the supposition of a total incapacity for it will prevent its being used, except some extraordinary vigour of mind be exerted. You will be ready to think your friends unreasonable and unkind in urging you to do what you imagine you cannot do. Yet if you will so far hearken to them and oblige them as to make the trial, it would be of singular service. But the trial must be often repeated, and every fresh attempt will do you good. Nothing will be more pernicious than to brood over your complaints and grievances.

I hope you will be engaged to put such a force upon yourself, as still to admit and solicit the company of your friends, and still attend the house of God; for his worship yields a thousand comforts, and is admirably adapted to take the burden of grief from the mind. If your disorder should increase, you

may become almost weary of life. But allow me, dear sir, earnestly to beseech you to reject such thoughts with abhorrence, and banish them from your mind immediately, and exercise a humble patient submission to the will of God.

He hath placed you in a post of service. He hath, in your better days, honoured you with great acceptance and usefulness in the church. And if he sees fit to incapacitate you for further service and lay you aside, he may have wise and kind designs herein, and set you forth as an example of faith, patience, and meekness, under your heavy afflictions, and call upon you to inculcate upon others those virtues, by your pattern, which you have recommended to them by your preaching. We are not to think we are useless because we are not active. To stand and wait is serving. I have often heard your good mother describe the melancholy scenes of this kind which she had passed through, and the wonderful manner in which God preserved and relieved her. From what I have heard so often and so affectionately from her, I take the liberty to suggest these hints to you.

I hope you need not any advice and consolation I can give; but I was willing at least to express my sympathy with you, and concern for your restoration. I will not trespass upon your strength and spirits. I only repeat the assurance of my tender compassion, good wishes, and prayers for you.

I desire to be respectfully remembered to your connexions. You are happy, at least ought to be, and to think yourself so, in having so many agreeable relations, who are disposed and always ready to afford you any relief in their power, and whom you cannot please and oblige more than by being willing to admit and receive it. May a gracious God lighten your burdens, relieve your spirits, restore your health, and enable you to finish your course with joy.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionately sympathizing friend and brother,

And faithful servant.

LETTER XXVII.

Nov. 3, 1777.

Dear Sir,—Your brother Fenner's letter brought me the melancholy intelligence, which your last gave me too much reason to expect. I had very little hope of your sister's recovery, by the account you gave me of the nature and violence of her disorder. I very tenderly sympathize with her husband and you, and with my good friends at Salop, under this heavy affliction.

I wrote immediately to Mr. Gentleman,* and desired him to visit your afflicted parents, and suggest proper encouragements and consolations to them. I am too weak to think of writing to them, especially as it must be in long-hand; and I am obliged to be very cautious of writing to any of my old friends at Shrewsbury, as others of them would expect civilities of that kind, and this would be very injurious to me. I have no doubt but Mr. G. will say every thing suitable to them; and I pray God it may relieve their distressed spirits, and fill them with divine support and consolation. I know you will write to them, when you can recover your spirits and secure a little time.

I am sensible this stroke will fall heavy upon you, after Providence had in so wonderful a manner brought your sister to you and fixed her so comfortably. So uncertain are all earthly enjoyments and expectations! God is now calling you out to be an example, as well as a preacher, of submission, patience, serenity, and even cheerfulness, under a very heavy stroke. I hope you will stand the trial well; act and appear as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, enduring hardness and suffering; and be in all respects, especially this, "an ensample to the flock." They will now have their eyes upon you, to see how you behave, and what correspondence there is between your own temper and your exhortations to them. And I hope they will see an entire and beautiful agreement between them. I know you will feel tenderly under such a loss, but you will guard against an excess. It was ordained in the law of Moses, that a priest of the Lord should not mourn so long, nor in such particular forms, as others did; no doubt to be examples of patience to Israel. You will keep this thought in mind, and let your people see by your conversation, prayers, and whole deportment, that though your heart is deeply wounded, yet you feel the force of Christian principles and motives.

I hope and believe you have every desirable encouragement with relation to the temper and character, and consequently the present happiness, of your dear sister. For this you will be thankful; in this you will rejoice; nor too much regret her departure from her family and you, when she is removed to your common Father and Saviour, and entered on uninterrupted and eternal rest. By suggesting these thoughts frequently to her afflicted companion, and other relations and friends, they will abide with more power and sweetness on your own spirit: and instead of being "as when a standard-bearer fainteth," you will

* Then minister to the congregation at Shrewsbury, to which the friends of the deceased belonged. He was a native of the place, and had enjoyed Mr. Orton's instructions and patronage, whom he succeeded as pastor of that part of the society which separated, upon Mr. Orton's resignation. He afterwards went to Carmarthen, as tutor to the academy there, from whence he removed to Kidderminster, and was the first minister of the new meeting erected upon the division which took place after the death of Mr. Fawcett, and there he died.

approve yourself a valiant servant of Christ. I know you will take this opportunity to cherish and strengthen serious impressions and pious dispositions on their hearts, that by the sorrow of their countenances their hearts may be made better.

Assure Mr. G— of my sincere and tender sympathy and prayers for his support and consolation, and for wisdom and grace to improve this awful stroke to the best and most salutary purposes. I have just been reading the Life of Mr. Halyburton, an eminent Scotch divine, and professor of divinity; which, with any of his works that you may meet with, I recommend to your reading. Upon the death of a beloved child, he makes this reflection, "Blessed be God for a child to give at his call, and blessed be God who enabled me to give her willingly!"

I hope and believe I need not enlarge on this occasion, but I write this amidst much weakness, as a proof of my sympathy and affection. "May he who comforteth them that are cast down, comfort you in all your tribulations!" And remember why he doth it. Read carefully 2 Cor. i. 3—7. I hope you will preach and pray better; more to the comfort and advantage of your hearers, especially those who are in affliction, by what you yourself have endured. My respects to your wife, and to Mr. Fenner, with thanks for his letter. May God strengthen you for all you have to do and bear; improve your Christian experience, and increase your zeal and usefulness, by the afflictive scenes through which he is leading you.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionately sympathizing friend and brother,
And faithful servant.

Perhaps the 13th of my Sermons to the Aged may afford you and Mr. G. some assistance and consolation in present circumstances.

LETTER XXVIII.

February 3, 1778.

Dear Sir,—It would be very painful to me as well as to you, but I am almost ready to think it my duty, to chide you for the mournful strain in which you continue to write, relating to your sister. Indeed, my good friend, you write and act wrong. Her death was, and doubtless will long be, a painful event to you; but few persons ever lost a sister, who had, considering all things, more reason to be patient and content; yea I will add, to rejoice and be thankful. I feel with you and for you very tenderly; but must desire you to take the utmost pains, by reflection on what she was and is, and by earnest prayer, to cheer your gloomy mind, and "in every thing to give thanks."

Otherwise you will hurt your own health; go on uncomfortably in your work; set a bad example to your flock; appear ungrateful to God for so many mitigating and comfortable circumstances attending this affliction; and perhaps provoke him to make an awful breach upon some remaining comforts. I hope thus much will be sufficient to engage you to take pains to rule your spirit and encourage your heart.

In order to help nature, and at the same time relieve the spirit, use as much air and exercise as you can; and especially apply yourself, with peculiar zeal and diligence, to your great work. God calls you to this by the afflictive stroke with which he hath smitten you. And there is one branch of your pastoral duty to which it particularly calls you, and should strongly excite you. Give me leave to exhort you to set about it immediately. It is, that you go round, as soon as you can, to every family in your congregation, where there are any young people, and address them seriously on the subject of religion. You will have a fine, easy, and natural opportunity of introducing such an address, without any appearance of affectation. Excuse me if I put some words in your mouth. "Well, my young friends, you are no strangers to the painful affliction with which I have been lately exercised, in the loss of an amiable and pious sister, happily settled in the world. A few months ago she was in the bloom of youth and vigour of health, with the most agreeable prospects before her, as to future life. But you see, in this instance, how precarious all such pleasing circumstances are. How soon she was called away from all mortal scenes, comforts, and expectations, and summoned into eternity! I bless God she was ready; had minded religion as the 'one thing needful;' loved prayer, ordinances, &c. So soon may your pleasing hopes be broken, and you be called away from all earthly things. Fain would I have you consider it and lay it to heart, and never suffer any of the businesses or vanities of life, any pleasing hopes and prospects in this world, to influence you to forget death and eternity, and neglect your best interests. I myself would willingly improve, and lead you to improve, such an event, and I shall think it upon the whole a merciful one, if it should engage those young persons who knew her character, and saw her end, to remember their Creator, to give themselves up to the Lord," &c.

But I need not enlarge; your own understanding and knowledge of the world, especially of your flock, will furnish you with suitable materials for such an address, and your own feelings will put a weight and tenderness into it, which I have reason to believe (nay have no doubt) will, by the blessing of God, have a good effect. Pray think of this seriously, and set about it immediately. The pleasure you will have in the attempt, and the advantages which I hope you will experience

from it, will edify, encourage, and delight your mind, and show you what wise and kind intentions Providence had in an event which hath been so painful to you. Thus out of the eater may come forth meat, and out of the bitter sweetness. This affliction may also enable you the better to exhort, encourage, and comfort, any of your flock who may have lost, or may soon lose, some valuable relatives. You have more than ever felt the tender emotions, and will know how to pity others, and to "comfort them with those consolations with which," I hope and believe, you will be "comforted of God."

There is one motive suggested in your letter which should, and I hope will, excite you to such an attention to your flock as I am now recommending. I refer to your sister's exhortation to you to "deal plainly and faithfully with poor sinful mortals, who may soon appear before their Judge." Let that never be forgotten. When you are tempted to decline such services, think that you hear your sister speaking to you from the grave, or rather from the celestial mansions, and charging you, by every solemn endearing obligation, to set about this work immediately. "The night cometh when no man can work."

You will not wonder that it gave me pleasure to be informed of your sister's remarks upon sermons which she heard from me. I hope I am thankful for this; it is an encouragement to me; let it be an encouragement to you in your work. We know not what good we do; and how much advantage many of our hearers may gain by our public and private instructions, which we may never hear of in this world. I rejoice with you and your father and mother in your sister's honourable and happy end. Stronger consolation and more delightful relief pious mourners cannot have, than the knowledge of such a scene, and the reflection upon that piety which laid so solid a foundation for such hope and joy in death. It is ground of further thankfulness, that so many of the funeral sermons are sent for to St. Ives:* it is an honourable testimony to her worthy and pious behaviour there, and I hope the sermon, in connexion with their knowledge of the deceased, will do good in that town. I received the copies of it which you sent to me and Mr. Fawcett, and we both return you our thanks. I think it well calculated to do good. The character is just such as I like; true and comprehensive, yet not fulsome and tedious. I hope Mr. Fenner will not be displeased with the liberty I have used with his sermon.

I wish the congregation at W—— may be peaceably and

* In Huntingdonshire, where the deceased had for some time resided, and where Mr. John Jennings had formerly been minister, to whose particular notice Mr. Orton, with his usual kindness had recommended her; which he mentions in a former letter, at the same time speaking with great respect of Mr. J. as a fellow pupil of his, whose ill health obliged him to quit the ministry. He was the son of Mr. Jennings, at Kibworth, the tutor of Dr. Doddridge.

comfortably settled. But ministers should never be made referees in such cases; they should always be the laity, as it is difficult not to give offence to one party or another, and they are generally better judges of settlements and pecuniary matters than ministers are.

The case of Mr. — is very affecting; that of Dr. Furneaux is on some accounts worse, as he is raving mad, and never likely to be sane again,* it being an hereditary disease. Such cases ought to affect all that know of them, with great thankfulness for the continuance of their understandings, and great care to use their faculties, while continued, to the most valuable and useful purposes. These cases read a lesson to ministers, which I hope they will lay to heart and duly improve. When I am ready to murmur and sink under some of my corporeal burdens, I think of their case, and hope it promotes both my patience and thankfulness. How light are my griefs compared with theirs! How thankful should I be that I am yet capable of being of some use in life, more than several of my friends and acquaintances are.

I desired Mr. Eddowes to send you a parcel of my Sacramental Meditations. If you think it proper you will, I know, recommend them to your flock and neighbours, especially to those who are received to communion, or desire to be so. I bless God, as far as I have heard, they have met with as much acceptance as I could reasonably hope. Several clergymen of the establishment, particularly Dr. Adams, and Dr. Tucker, the dean of Gloucester, recommend them as proper to be taken to the altar, to peruse before and after receiving. Many of our dissenters seem pleased with them, though they will never suit the Socinians, nor those who are fond of mysteries in the Lord's supper. But I hope they will do some good, and shall be glad to hear of it.

I shall rejoice to hear of your little boy's getting safely through the small-pox. I pray God spare him to be a comfort to you. But remember, *all is vanity.* I have little to say of myself. I bless God I have had a more comfortable winter hitherto than some years past. I hope I am not quite useless; but I have some painful reflections on having "done the work of the Lord negligently." I wish and pray that you may have more agreeable reflections and reviving hopes when you stand, like me, on the confines of the other world. In order thereto, labour to contract a habit of serious, lively, fixed devotion in private, and deal faithfully and plainly with the souls and consciences of all under your care. I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend, and humble servant.

* This proved to be the case. For many years he had not a rational interval, and never discovered any traces of the scholar or the Christian. The apprehension of this dreadful malady occasioned him to abstain from marrying.

Let me recommend to you a book called the Errors of the Church of Rome detected, by one Smith, a convert from popery, a sensible learned work, about four shillings.

Mr. Robins proposes to take Mr. Kenrick for his assistant. He has excellent Levitical blood in him, being descended, both by father and mother, from a race of as eminent ministers as ever were in the Welsh part of the kingdom.*

LETTER XXIX.

June 18, 1778.

Dear Sir,—I am glad to hear of your health, and that you have so well recovered your spirits, which I hope you will continue heartily to devote to your great Master's work. I am very sensible of the difficulty you lie under in visiting your people, from their wide and scattered situation. But it seems best to devote an afternoon to one of the villages or hamlets, and to see each family in it. It would be unprofitable to spend much time with any one, so as to hinder you from seeing the rest. To call at every house, to inquire after the family, and drop a word of exhortation to them, will be taken well, and do them good. If there be any thing peculiar in the circumstances of any families, as being in affliction, having many children &c., some peculiar attention will be necessary to them. The great thing is, to do what you can, when you cannot do what you would, and to endeavour to make your visits turn to some good account. These little excursions, suppose once in a week, may be favourable to your health, as well as contribute to your esteem and affection from the people, and the greater usefulness of your public services.

You will soon observe in what places and families you meet with the most proper and encouraging reception, and which you are most likely to do good. Persons who are frequently ill, and therefore hindered from attending public worship so often as they wish, are peculiarly worthy of your visits and regard. You will judge by various circumstances how to conduct this important matter of pastoral visiting: the main thing is, to keep alive upon your mind a deep and tender concern for the best interest of your people; and then you will find the truth of Solomon's observation; "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips," Prov. xvi. 23. I have no doubt but you will consider the *youth* of your flock, as the particular objects of your attention, and endeavour to form them to a wise, serious, and humble spirit.

I am obliged to Mr. Fenner for the candour with which he

* He afterwards removed to Exeter, where he lately died very suddenly.

received my remarks upon his sermon, which really does him credit, and is approved by my acquaintance who have read it. The decent, reserved, and yet comprehensive manner in which he speaks of your sister charms them all, being so unlike most funeral sermons in that respect. I am sorry for the afflictions of Mr. G——'s family. I wish them divine support, and that they may duly improve such affecting and instructive scenes. I heard from Manchester of the death of Mr. Nichol, who was in his 74th year, as I find by my register. Dr. Adams and he were on the same bench at school for several years. When the doctor lately called on me I mentioned this event, and he appeared affected with it. He seems well and hearty, considering his age, and is in high repute at Oxford.

Providence has been making many other breaches upon our brethren, in and about London. The death of Mr. Pickard, and of Dr. Wilton, are a great blow upon our interest, as they were both active and useful men. Mr. Tayler, who succeeds Mr. Pickard at Carter Lane, and was lately ordained there, preached and printed his funeral sermon, which is an exceeding good one, and worth your perusal. Mr. Palmer, of Hackney, printed his for Dr. Wilton, which, though in my judgment not equal to Mr. Tayler's, is a sensible useful discourse, and well suited to the occasion. Mr. Gentleman was invited to succeed Dr. Wilton,* but refused the application, as this meeting is rather declining; and in point of salary I think he is better where he is; nor would he have drawn well with the stiff Independent brethren, with whom he must have had some connexion.†

I have been peculiarly affected by the death of Mr. Lister, of Ware in Hertfordshire. He came to Northampton a few days after me. We were class-fellows, and always intimate and friendly. It is remarkable that our class, though it consisted of ten pupils, is now gone off the stage, excepting myself, who am but half alive; whereas, of every other class which Dr. Doddridge had (though some of them consisted of but three or four), there is more than one living. This is an affecting and instructive circumstance, to me in particular, and I wish I may make a due improvement of it.

I am sorry to hear that your neighbour ——— declines the ministry, especially for the reason you give. West Bromwich will soon be vacant. I wish they may meet with a seasonable supply, as we are very happy in this country, in a set of worthy, serious, diligent ministers, who are acceptable to their respective

* At the Weigh House, upon the doctor's own recommendation.

† The ministers at the Weigh House were used to sit at the Presbyterian Fund Board, as did Dr. Wilton. The last of the Calvinistic Presbyterians in this place was Dr. William Langford, an excellent and amiable man, whom the editor had the pleasure of assisting a few of the first years of his ministry. A just account of him is given by Dr. Gibbons, in his funeral sermon.

flocks, and very harmonious with each other. I hear that Miss Ashworth died last week of a bad fever, just as she was going to be married to a considerable merchant in London. How awfully is that family melted away in a few years!

Our townsman Mr. Thomson, of London, has been here and preached our charity sermon with great acceptance, when a larger collection was made than ever before. He and Mr. Urwick supped with me on Lord's day evening, and it was no little pleasure to me to entertain two such valuable ministers, who were both born in the same parish with myself. They do great honour to the name of Shrewsbury.

Mr. H * *, a young man from this town,* who has been some time with Mr. Gentleman, has begun to preach. Mr. * and * * speak of him in high terms, as a very serious, sensible, modest preacher. I am glad to hear of any such rising up in any place at a time when they are so scarce, and so much needed.

I am glad my Sacramental Meditations were agreeable to you. Many of them have not yet been sold. They have not been much advertised, nor noticed in the reviews. I have no objection to lose by the publication, if it please God to make it instrumental of doing good.

I understand a young man has been supplying at * *, but he is too much in the new fashioned way to suit the serious people. His language is what I suppose he calls "sublime and elegant;" but I apprehend not adapted to the capacities of common hearers. There is an affectation of such language, and of what they call oratory, in many of our young preachers. It is a very easy thing to talk in that strain. To speak in plain, familiar, yet proper and pertinent language, is not so easy, but requires more pains than they choose to take; yet without this, I see no good end their preaching is likely to answer.

Allow me to desire you to get Scudder's Christian's Daily Walk. I know no better book to improve you as a Christian, and to assist you in your work as a minister. Pray send for Mr. Howe's Funeral Sermon for Mr. Frost of Yarmouth.† It is an excellent discourse, and admirably fitted to lend to poor, melancholy, dejected Christians.

You kindly inquire after my health. Since the weather has grown warm, I have been worse than in the winter. I find a sensible decay of my flesh, and the least application to study or writing fatigues me. In short, I have almost lost that "spirit of a man" which would "sustain his infirmities." Learn from this account, how much it is your wisdom, duty, and interest, to

* Kidderminster. See page 574.

† Mr. Thomas Howe was a native of Northampton, and began his studies under Dr. Doddridge. Mr. Frost had been many years laid aside from public service, and had laboured under such mental depression as rendered the sermon above recommended particularly seasonable. Mr. Howe, before he went to Yarmouth, had been some years at Walpole, where he was succeeded by Mr. John Walker.

redeem time, to apply diligently to your great work, to keep up lively habitual devotion, and embrace every opportunity of doing good. Keep these thoughts and resolutions ever in your heart; and may God quicken and enable you to act with the seriousness, gravity, zeal, and benevolence of the Christian, the minister, the pastor, the dying creature!

Yours affectionately,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XXX.

TO THE REV. MR. HUGHES.

Jan. 1, 1779.

DEAR SIR,—I was glad to receive your letter of Nov. 24, and to hear of the increase of your family. I wish your children may be spared to be comforts to their parents and very useful in the world. * * * I have been once or twice in the company of Mr. Cope, of Duffield, who was a fellow pupil of Dr. Doddridge. I am glad to hear his estate is come into hands which will make a good use of it, and especially devote part of it to promote the interest of religion. Mr. * * will, I believe, be very comfortable in the house of * *, at Manchester, but I had rather have heard of his being fixed among his own people. It is seldom well with a congregation when its minister is a non-resident, though he is not far from them. I wish the connexions he may meet with at Manchester may not divert him from his studies; which, at his time of life, he ought to ply most diligently. I knew more than one who acted in that wrong manner; of whom one was * *, whose congregation sunk to nothing under him. I am glad to hear of the increase of our interest in your parts, and wish the congregations may all be fixed with serious, active, useful ministers. I know nothing of Mr. —— but by report. It is very well to be "valiant for *liberty*," if the courageous man has a proper idea of it; but I should have rejoiced more to have heard that he had been "valiant for *truth*," holiness, and peace, and remarkably alive for the conversion and salvation of souls. We have some ministers who are zealous for liberty, but the souls of their flocks are neglected, and our interest is sinking under them.

Another of Mr. Gentleman's pupils has preached here on Christmas day, with great modesty and seriousness. I was much pleased with his services, and have given him some books to encourage him.*

* See page 586. Here follows a long (and, at that time, an interesting) account of Caermarthen academy, with his reasons for wishing it to be removed back to Salop.

It is of great importance to have a good tutor to the Welsh academy, as so many more young divines are educated there than at any of our English seminaries. I heartily wish that Providence may direct to a suitable person. There are other qualifications besides learning, which many would call secondary, but which I call primary ones.

I had no thoughts of "printing Sermons to Young People." There are so many under that title, that there is no occasion to add to them. Perhaps my Catechism is a more useful book to put into the hands of youth. My printing work is done. I have no ability to proceed any further, nor indeed much encouragement, as I rather lose by my publications. But that I should not regret, if I had any satisfactory evidence that they had been useful in the world.

I wish you had proceeded to "preach" to me.* I want the assistance, instruction, and consolation, of my brethren, and am glad to receive them from any hand, especially theirs from whose hearts I know they proceed. I feel daily the upbraiding of conscience for many deviations from the rules of duty, and those lessons of instruction which I have inculcated upon others; and the view of a future account sometimes distresses me. I desire to live and die as a humble penitent believer, renouncing all self-dependence, and "looking for the mercy of Jesus Christ to eternal life." I tell you how I am, and what I feel, that I may engage you to pray for me, and to be more watchful over your own heart, more active in your ministerial labours, and especially in your private addresses to the consciences of your hearers. Let me know what you are doing for our common Master, and how the work of the Lord prospers in your hands. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXI.

May 24, 1779.

Dear Sir,—The contents of your last were very pleasing to me, and led me to thank God for you, that he keeps your heart right as to the ends of your ministry, and gives you so much encouragement in it. I wish the death of your servant may be over-ruled for good to yourself and flock. It was a very awful and instructive providence; and though you may not have any self-accusations relating to your behaviour to your servants, this should be, and I am persuaded will be, a motive to you to pay peculiar attention to their temporal and religious interests.

The account of your religious society gives me peculiar satisfaction, as I hope it will be a seed of piety and usefulness. It

* The writer most probably meant to expostulate with him on that dejection of spirit which his letters so often discovered.

will be your wisdom to endeavour, as much as you prudently can, to restrain and lessen that spirit of gaiety which prevails so much in almost every place. If you can make their hearts serious and thoughtful, they will, in time, see and forsake these follies which they contract in this luxurious age. The number and distance of your people will cut you out much work among them. Pursue it closely; for the best school for a minister is conversation with his flock respecting their soul concerns. It will teach him more than any books or study, and qualify him to preach to the heart. You will see, by such conversation, what strain of preaching suits them best, and impresses them most, and of course will pursue that.

Endeavour to guard your young people against conceit and vain confidence; and in order to that, strive to enlarge their minds in useful knowledge, and make it subservient to practical purposes. From your increasing acquaintance with them, their families, business, connexions, &c., you will observe what are "the sins which easily beset them," and endeavour, with the greatest care, to secure them against these. It may not be improper to keep a written list of your flock, and make memoranda of what you have said, or would, or should say to them; what books you should recommend, &c. You will find great advantage by this; for, in so numerous a congregation, you will be apt to forget some circumstances which it may be useful to remember. I have no doubt but you are daily seeking divine direction, that you may "know how to speak a word in season," and have a proper mixture of courage and prudence, that your pious intentions may not be defeated. After visiting and conversing with any, it will be useful to spread their case before the Lord in your private devotions, which will impress it upon your spirit, and, it may be hoped, engage the divine blessing on your attempts for their spiritual good.

I know very little of Mr. Lucas* who is chosen at Salop, but Mr. Robins and others gave me encouragement to second their invitation, which was quite unanimous. Many letters have passed between us, and he spent a day here last week. I like him the better the more I see of him, and hope he will be very useful. He is, in some points, higher than I could wish, but seems moderate, candid, and disposed to be upon good terms with his brethren.

I was much vexed that * * preached at the new chapel, especially as he preached in a bigoted, furious, railing way about the Trinity, of which I am sure he knows very little; and as to modesty, humility, and candour, he possesses none.

* Mr. Samuel Lucas was a native of St. Edmondsbury, and was educated under Dr. Conder, at Homerton. He was first settled at Walsall, where he was much benefited by his acquaintance with Mr. Robins, then of West-Bromwich. He well suited the congregation at Shrewsbury, and died a few years ago much regretted.

You would hear the history of the liturgy* from your mother. Mr. F —— and Mr. S —— read it alternately morning and evening, but go on in the old way in the afternoon. Mr. F —— administers the Lord's supper by it. Some of his congregation, who were formerly stiff church people, dislike it. The dissenters come readily into it. This is strange!

I am glad to hear you have got Flavel. I hope you and your people will receive much benefit by his works. I have gone through all his volumes again this winter on my couch, and read them with continued pleasure; I hope with some improvement. I cannot serve Mr. * * here in the present decayed state of our trade. We now have only 700 looms going, whereas seven years ago we had 1700.

I am sorry you are troubled with the company of your children's parents on the Lord's day. I think you should absolutely insist upon it that you have no visitors on that day; this ought to be a condition of admittance into your school.

You have heard of our bill passing through both houses of parliament and receiving the royal assent. I hope you will have no scruple about complying with such reasonable terms. It is not "acknowledging the magistrate's right in sacred matters," but only submitting to the conditions on which he grants us an indemnity from civil offices, and the burdens which, as subjects, we ought to bear in common with others. But I suppose some of our very refined brethren will still object and complain.

I am very weak. Learn to work vigorously while you can. Lose no opportunity of dropping something that may do your people good; and may God abundantly bless and prosper you in all your endeavours!—I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful.

LETTER XXXII.

Feb. 2, 1780.

Dear Sir,—The last letter which I received from you was about Michaelmas last; and I find, by looking at my list of letters (which is now a considerable volume, having been begun in the year 1743) that I wrote to you on Wednesday, October 13.

There has been lately printed a new edition of a tract addressed to dissenting ministers, by Mr. Nathaniel Neal, an attorney in London, and son to the writer of the History of the Puritans. I think it a most valuable and useful piece,† which

* Which had been introduced at the old chapel, where Mr. Orton was so long minister.

† So it certainly is, in the main; but the writer prescribes some things which, to many worthy ministers, are impracticable; particularly in the composition of sermons,

I wish all ministers, especially young ones, would attend to. I have sent a parcel to Mr. Holland, to be distributed in his neighbourhood, and I suppose you will have one, with which I think you will be pleased, and both you and your flock profited.

I have been lately much entertained with reading the Lives of the Fathers, published by Erasmus Middleton, a clergyman in London. He was one of the students expelled from Oxford for being *too good*. It is a book well worth your reading, though some parts are rather tedious. Price 6s.* Pray get a sixpenny pamphlet, entitled Public and Domestic Devotion, written by one Martin, a Baptist minister in London. It is very sensible, serious, and useful.

I know not whether you have seen Letsome's Preacher's Assistant: or, an account of all the sermons which have been printed, and the texts regularly set down from Genesis to Revelation, with a reference to the authors. There is a new edition of it, with additions down to the present time, by a clergyman at Oxford, in two volumes 8vo. price 16s. If you can spare so much money, you will find it a very useful book to increase your acquaintance with our sermon-writers, and direct you, when you have formed your plan upon a particular text, to consult what divines you have, who have published a sermon on that subject. I have found great use of it in this view.

Mr. Barnes [now Dr. Barnes] is going to Manchester. I trust his serious lively strain of preaching will do much good in that declining church.

Some strolling preachers, under the patronage of Lady Huntingdon, have lately set up a meeting here, which Mr. F—— has, I think very unwisely, rather encouraged. I suppose it will in time thin his own congregation. They preach in the antinomian strain, which suits many people here, who don't love "doing;" some of whom, with much zeal for orthodoxy, want common honesty. I have been much confined by the severe weather. But I bless God my spirits have been pretty good, generally rising as high as alacrity. I find myself grow weaker and less able to bear any thing. I often think of David, who feared not the lion and the bear in his youth, yet complained and was ready to sink under pining sickness. But I trust God will support me, whatever he allots to me.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

which he says ought to be superior to what their people can read at home. What modest man would ever ascend a pulpit if he thought this was expected from him?

N. B. Mr. Orton himself printed this new edition.

* The work was completed in four vols. entitled the Biographia Evangelica. The author was some time curate to Dr. Cadogan, at Chelsea, and lately died at Turvey, in Bedfordshire, which living was in the gift of the late Mr. William Fuller, banker in London.

LETTER XXXIII.

Sept. 13, 1780.

INDEED, my good friend, I am not pleased with your so long delaying to write to me. I was anxious about the effect of your journey.

You say, "you are generally at a loss for suitable materials for a letter to me." But why should you be so? I do not want the tittle-tattle of the country, nor to hear about persons of whom I know nothing, except there be something peculiar in their cases and circumstances. I follow you with a truly paternal solicitude, and therefore am most desirous to know what you are doing for our great Master, and for his cause and interest in the world: what pains you are taking to instruct and encourage the young; to visit and comfort the afflicted; whether you drop a word of exhortation to apprentices, servants, and children, in your pastoral visits; how your services in public are attended; whether there is any shaking among the dry bones; and whether your people behave to you and one another, and all about them, in a manner agreeable to the doctrine you preach, and the pains you take with them; whether any good is going on in the neighbourhood; and how the cause of our common Master flourishes among you. Such things as these should always lie nearest to a minister's heart, and some encouraging account of them will be the best intelligence to his friends who are concerned for the support of religion, and interest themselves particularly in what relates to his reputation and usefulness. I should be glad also to know what you are doing in your private studies; what books you have read, or are reading, especially practical and useful books. Any thing of this kind would be peculiarly agreeable to me, as a hearty well-wisher to your growing acceptance and usefulness.

I hope you will converse as much as you can with commentators, and especially that you will get and read all the books of our old divines that you can meet with. I have lately read the works of one Wheatly, who was a minister at Banbury, in James the First's time; and excepting a few obsolete words, is one of the best practical writers I ever met with: full of matter, good sense, and an extensive knowledge of human nature, without any of the metaphysical distinctions and scholastic phrases which the ministers of the last age were too fond of. I was pleased with his style, his conciseness, and especially the warmth and seriousness of his addresses. I wish you could meet with any of his works. I have recommended them to Mr. Jevans [of Bloxham, in that neighbourhood]; but neither he

nor Mr. Brabant* [of the same place] nor Mr. Hampton [minister of Banbury†] ever heard of his works, which to me seems strange.

I am glad Dr. Stonhouse has taken notice of your brother. He is a faithful friend; and when he professes a regard to a person, and a readiness to serve him, he will spare no pains to do it. But the doctor is in a poor state of health, and at present in great trouble. His eldest son, whom he would (I think very culpably) send to the East Indies, in order to his being *a great man*, was in one of the ships taken by the Spaniards, and is, I suppose, now at Cadiz. This is a grievous circumstance to the doctor and his lady, as he has been nearly at the expence of a thousand pounds in fitting him out, and had an agreeable prospect of procuring a comfortable and profitable settlement for him, under the patronage of some gentlemen who will leave that country before he can sail again. This circumstance I mention so particularly, as it contains important hints of instruction to you who are parents, not to raise your expectations too high, nor to "seek great things" for your children; but remember *that* is best for them which is best for their souls.

I am sorry that I have but a discouraging account to give you of some of our worthy and useful friends. [The illness of several is here very tenderly mentioned.] My worthy friend and pastor, Mr. Fawcett, is never likely to preach again. About two months ago he was seized with great pain, and upon examination was found to have a stone, though not large. He has been confined to his house and suffered much ever since. There are some circumstances relating to this good man very remarkable. He used to think that sick and infirm persons might do more than they did; and in some cases he judged right. Having always had good health and spirits himself, he used to imagine, and sometimes to tell me, that I might now and then preach, or at least attend some of their prayer-meetings, and that I should exert myself more. Now, *he* is so weak and low-spirited that he can scarcely speak to me without tears.

* Mr. Brabant, then living, had been many years minister at Bloxham, near Banbury, in Oxfordshire, but was never ordained as pastor, having some scruples about baptism, &c. and Mr. Hampton administered that and the Lord's supper for him to the last. He had formerly been assistant to Dr. Doddridge. He resigned his charge some years before his decease, and spent part of his time at Bristol Wells, on account of his health.

† Mr. Hampton was many years there, and died at an advanced age, before his friend Mr. Brabant. He was a man of good learning, and published a piece on the atonement, in answer to Dr. Taylor. He lived on good terms with the clergymen of the town, who occupied his meeting house while the parish church was rebuilding.

Mr. Baxter speaks highly of the works of this Mr. Wheatly, which Mr. Orton so much recommends, as having been useful to himself, and republished a small piece of his, on the Redemption of Time. Mr. Jevans informs me, that he has since met with some of this author's works, and confirms Mr. Orton's character of them: viz. The Lives of the Old Testament Saints; a small folio; The Oil of Gladness, a small book, very consoling; A Sermon occasioned by a Fire at Banbury; and a piece on the New Birth.

The noise of the street and the company of a friend is too much for him. He has not been able to pray in his family, or write any thing, since his seizure, and frequently appears with all the flutter of an hysterical woman. So great a change doth sickness and pain make in the most vigorous and active!

He used to lay a great and much too disproportionate a stress on the manner in which persons behaved and expressed themselves in sickness and the near view of death; and in his funeral sermons would speak in high terms of those that died strongly expressing their hopes and joys, though some of them I knew to be very indifferent people as to their morals; whereas he would say nothing, or very little, of some excellent persons who had no transports, and expressed no particular consolations and hopes. Now, he is so extremely low (though he may linger on weeks and months*) that when I suggest some hints of encouragement and consolation to him, he seldom makes any answer, but drops a silent and mournful tear. Yesterday, when I said something of that kind, it put him quite into hysterics, and produced a flood of tears. This is an instructive circumstance, both to show us how little good we shall get, or do, in seasons of great weakness and languor, and how cautious we should be in expressing or forming our judgments on the real characters and states of our friends and acquaintance, by the particular manner in which they are affected in time of sickness, and in the views of death.

We are at present supplied by Mr. Parminter, a sensible, worthy, serious man, from the west, who, happily for us, was disengaged. He was a pupil of Mr. Rooker, but has nothing of his narrowness. Our people in general like him well; only those who are fond of the methodists think he does not make noise enough, nor preach so much in the antinomian strain as their favourite preachers do. Our congregation is in a very bad state, and I see nothing before us but confusion and division,† if another choice should soon be necessary. Such mischief hath arisen from the encouragement which Mr. Fawcett has unadvisedly given to lay-preachers and methodists, and I have often forewarned him that this would be the consequence, and that probably he might live to see it.

You may probably have heard that Sir H. T. (who has made some noise as a dissenting minister, and by his publications) has shut up his meeting-place, dismissed his assistant, has lately been reordained by the Bishop of Exeter, and is returned to the bosom of the church. I never expected any steadiness from him, but we scarcely suspected that he would have taken such a step as

* Mr. Fawcett died the month following. See an account of his death, his funeral, and his character, in a subsequent letter written to Mr. Jevans, who was a native of Kidderminster.

† A division in the congregation took place after Mr. Fawcett's death, but it was a prudent and amicable one, though the effects of it have proved unhappy.

this, after what he had published,* but many in the family have been unsteady and wrong-headed. The church will triumph, though they have no great acquisition by his change.

I bless God I have had a more comfortable summer than the last, having generally been in good spirits, though no day free from pain. I am a wonder to myself, when I consider the low state to which Mr. Fawcett is reduced; that so active and useful a man should be confined to his chamber of sickness, while I am capable of riding and walking every day. I am thankful for this degree of ease, as it gives me opportunity of visiting and assisting him. I have much to regret that I did not do more for my Master while I had ability. You will remember that "the days of darkness" and incapacity may "be many." "Whatever, therefore, your hand findeth you to do, do it with all your might."

I have lately read Mr. Holland's Charge, and the pieces that accompany it. I think Mr. Godwin [in his sermon] has given a very unfavourable account of the temper and character of our nonconforming fathers for the last fifty years, longer than which I can remember. I am sorry to find my friend Holland sink the inspiration of the apostles and their epistles lower than I think he can justify. I have freely written to him on the subject.

I wish you increasing comfort and usefulness in your domestic and ministerial character. In order to this, keep near to God. Remember, "he that watereth shall be also watered himself." He that seriously attempts to do good to others, will at last do good to his own soul, and have his Master's approbation.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIV.

June 1, 1781.

Dear Sir,—Our countryman Shenstone says, in one of his epistles, "Many delicate persons say, that in your letters you should carefully avoided all egotisms. This," says he, "is contrary to my judgment: I much approve them; and without them I should have nothing to say." I think it must be a pleasure to a friend who sympathizes with us, to receive some account of our weakness and infirmities, though it may give him pain to read the detail. I am desirous to trouble my friends with my grievances, principally that I may engage their prayers. I have seldom been able to attend public worship for some months past, and many days my spirits have been so very low, that I have been capable of no services and no enjoyments. I hope I have filled up some small link in the chain of

* On the Reason of his Nonconformity.

providence, and I am doing some good to my poor afflicted and necessitous neighbours, which is all I have been able to do. My hopes are very wavering, attended with many painful doubts and fears, and I am seldom an hour free from uneasiness. I often think of others worse than myself, and of every consideration likely to raise my spirits; but there is no reasoning with bad nerves, and a shattered frame.* I find it difficult to keep up worthy, honourable, and comfortable thoughts of the great Disposer of all things. I know he hath many deep and unknown purposes in thus afflicting his servants. I would be silent and submissive. I was much comforted lately by this remark of one of my favourite old writers—that "one act of silent submission, or a quiet application to those duties which are immediately necessary, though neither easy nor honourable, is of much more value than a long train of activity and zeal in a public and visible sphere of action [charmed] by reputation and applause."

The case of our tutors is very awful and melancholy. I fear Mr. Gentleman will not long be capable of the duties of his station. Mr. Robins's voice is so weak that he can neither preach nor read lectures. Dr. Conder, of London,† has had a paralytic stroke, which has quite incapacitated him for his work. Dr. Savage‡ is so infirm that he proposes resigning at the vacation. These are very discouraging circumstances to our interest; and the young divines from Warrington do not suit the bulk of our congregations in these parts of the kingdom. I trust the Head of the church will kindly appear to support what I assuredly believe is his cause.

The congregation at the old chapel, at Shrewsbury, have chosen Mr. H——. I hear that some of our friends there like him better than Mr. ——, because he is not so much of the orator. I lately had a letter from Mr. Lucas, who goes on comfortably, and the congregation rather increases under him. Some of his more judicious hearers think he improves in catholicism and moderation, and would be upon better terms with Mr. F—— if the latter had less formality and reserve. Upon the whole they are civil, and there are, as far as I can learn, no remains of the old leaven. But this unhappy liturgy is a bar to that free and open exchange of sentiments and civilities which otherwise might be maintained. The thought of such a change in their

* To this cause, undoubtedly, Mr. Orton's gloomy ideas and frequent complaints of himself are to be ascribed. It may afford some consolation to persons in a similar situation, to find themselves in the company of so excellent a man.

† More properly Hackney. He was divinity tutor of the academy at Homerton, but he had resigned the boarding of the students, and lived in my neighbourhood, where I had the pleasure of enjoying an intimate friendship with him.

‡ Dr. Samuel Morton Savage, who had been colleague with Dr. Jennings, succeeded him as divinity tutor in the academy at Hoxton; and was pastor of the church in Bury Street, in which Dr. Watts was his predecessor. A volume of his sermons was published after his death, with memoirs of him prefixed, by his relation Dr. Toulmin.

way of worship rather hurts me, when I recollect the place and people, and what I have heard from that pulpit. I have this week heard of some of your fellow pupils, Mr. Kings, Mr. Crabb of Cirencester,* &c., who go on comfortably and usefully.

I interest myself as much as I can in the concerns of the church, though my ability is small, and my sphere of usefulness very narrow. But I often comfort myself with those words of God to David, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart;" and those of our Lord to the woman that anointed his feet, "She hath done what she could." Our great Master accepts "the willing mind," but not where there is ability and opportunity to exert ourselves in his service. It will be sad if we abuse his grace and lenity to be idle, or to do much less than we could or should do. I hope your congregation continues in a flourishing state, and that you are a faithful, watchful, and affectionate shepherd. May the Lord strengthen you for your work, and make it very prosperous.

I am assuredly yours, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

Sept. 24, 1781.

My dear Friend,—Your letter which I received yesterday was so very kind and affectionate, that I cannot but return an immediate answer to it. I have indeed been very ill, and obliged to be a very bad correspondent. I have often, in my own apprehension, been on the borders of the grave. Still I am very weak, "the grasshopper is a burden," and the shaking of a leaf terrifies me. My mind is still in an anxious and uneasy state. You think and write too well of me. I can, in my most comfortable moments, expect no such glory and happiness as my worthy tutor, and many of my pious and active friends and brethren, have attained. But I shall think myself happy, and under the greatest obligations to divine grace, if I may be admitted among them, into the lowest place in that blessed world. Let all this be a motive to you to do the Lord's work diligently; to watch over your own heart, with the utmost care; to keep near to God, and act upon religious principles; especially to "watch for souls as one that must give account."

You have probably heard that God hath removed good Mr. Harrop, of Wem, to a better world. I wish that congregation may be supplied with a suitable minister, but they are reduced

* He afterwards removed to Royston, where he died, at the age of forty-five. See some account of him drawn up by the Rev. H. Worthington, prefixed to a volume of his sermons, published for the benefit of his orphan children; also his funeral sermon, by the editor, with the speech at his interment by the Rev. R. Hall, of Cambridge.

to a very low state, by the incursion of the methodists and other disorderly people. It is, I think, the only instance I have known of a serious, active, laborious, and truly evangelical preacher and pastor, who hath seen his congregation sinking under him.

I wonder you should mention leaving Bury. Pray know when you are well. Be thankful for your encouragement and prospects, and be as diligent and active a pastor as you can. A minister seldom loses the esteem and affection of his people, if he continues to take pains, and doth not sink into sloth and indolence. If there be objections against Bury, remember our Shrewsbury proverb—"Nought which I know—" You will be better able to overcome the difficulties you are acquainted with, than those which may arise in another place, and may be of a more grievous nature. I thank you again for your hints of advice and consolation, and am

Yours, very sincerely and affectionately.

LETTER XXXVI.

March 30, 1782.

So, my dear friend, "the Lord hath taken from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." But he doth not add, as he did to Ezekiel, "Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down." There was particular reason in his case, for he was to be "a sign to them," Ezek. xxiv. 16—24. Yet you, as a minister of Christ, are to be "an example to the flock," and therefore will guard against excessive grief, or any thing that may hinder you in your work, or make you less capable of it.

Your letter, of but ten days' date before the last, gave me a pleasing account of your family. I rejoiced with you, and endeavoured to be thankful for you. I was going to write to you, and should have hinted to you to "rejoice with trembling," remembering the very awful scene you was a spectator of, and a sharer in, a few years ago. I am indeed truly and deeply affected with your loss. When I had the first intimation of it from Mr. E. it was my earnest prayer that you might have divine support and consolation, in this very distressing circumstance. Since your letter confirmed the mournful account, I have, in my poor way, spread your case before him "who comforteth them that are cast down." I wish I had ability and spirit to suggest any thing that might be consoling to you. But the books you mention will do it better than I can do. I wish you to add to them, if you can borrow it, Emlyn's Sermon on the Death of his Wife, which I think is the best on the subject I ever saw.

I hope you will not be overwhelmed with sorrow, but, while you have so much cause for rejoicing on account of your departed companion, will consider what is present duty, and what is the language and design of providence. And may God, when he is "chastening you sore, teach you out of his law."

I cannot pretend to advise, but it appears to be proper and best that you should give up your school, and apply yourself vigorously and entirely to the care of your own children, and the flock committed to you. But of the propriety of this step you will best judge in a little time, when your thoughts are more composed. The care of such a flock and family as yours, is sufficient without that of a school. Ministers who have small congregations and small families are more fit to undertake such a work. May God direct you in this important concern, and show you the way of duty, and give you strength equal to your duty.

Many eyes are now upon you, to see how you will behave in this heavy trial. May all your congregation and friends see and acknowledge that your behaviour is proper, becoming a Christian and a minister; that it may prove instructive to them, and they may learn wisdom and obedience by it.

I had your book by Mr. P., for which I thank you, and, God willing, may send you some remarks upon it, when I am able to write them, and you better able to consider them. In the mean time you will find great relief under your pain and sorrow, by applying diligently to your pastoral work and study, as far as your health will admit, which I beseech you to take care of for the sake of the poor children and the flock. And may God strengthen you both in the outward and inward man, that you may still be found in the way of duty; yea more active and vigorous in it, since you have had such affecting experience of the emptiness and fleeting nature of all earthly connexions and joys.

Our new congregation is still unsettled. We want a lively, serious, evangelical preacher, who runs into no extremes. Such a one would be very acceptable and useful here. We must attend to the affairs of the church and the concerns of our great Lord, amidst all our personal grief and sorrows, if we desire and hope that he should support and comfort us. I shall be glad to hear from you when you have leisure, and can give me an account of your plans and views. In the mean time you may depend upon my daily prayers.

I am, dear Sir,

Your truly sympathizing and faithful friend and servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE REV. MR. BILLINGSLEY,* AT CAM, NEAR DURSLEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

March 18, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—Yours of the 2nd instant I received with great pleasure, and I heartily rejoice with you in your encouragement at Cam, and the agreeable prospect you have of usefulness there. I had heard from Mr. H—— of your great acceptance among the people. Though there is great fickleness among dissenters, yet I hope your serious preaching, and the pains you take with your hearers, will "not be in vain in the Lord."

It is very desirable, if your health will admit, that you should "preach on the Lord's day evening at Dursley;" especially as you have so convenient a place.† Perhaps a lecture now and then on a week-day, especially at some holiday time, may be useful. I should think a small expence would put proper benches in your gallery; and if the people are desirous of your preaching there, they will contribute to erect them. But you must carefully consult your own health, and remember that there may be over-doing in well doing.

As to your "ordination," it is generally proper and most advisable that a minister should be ordained plebe præsente, in the face of the church where he presides. This was the primitive practice. And it is fit that the people should be reminded of their engagements, as the obligation of the relation between a minister and his people is mutual; and the rather as the people seldom consider their duty to their pastor in their proper light, and in its full extent. But the reason you suggest in your letter, when set in the balance against these general principles,‡ incline me to advise your being ordained at Bromsgrove, with Mr. Wells, as he is desirous you should. He will, God willing, be ordained in the spring, and will inform you whom he proposes to engage to carry on the work of the day.

* Mr. William Billingsley was a native of West Bromwich, in Staffordshire, where Mr. Robins was his pastor, who favoured me with the following letters, and who bears an honourable testimony to his character; as also does the Rev. Mr. Stedman, who knew him well, and who informs me that he was supported in his education by the liberality of Mrs. Sarah Brett, of the same place, who was the daughter of Mr. Matthew Henry. He received his academical learning under Dr. Ashworth, at Daventry, where he was contemporary with Mr. Wells, late of Bromsgrove. He was of a weak constitution and tender spirits, as appears from the following letters, and died of a decline a few years after his settlement in the ministry.

† It appears that Mr. Billingsley resided at Dursley, where there seems to have been an old meeting-house unoccupied.

‡ In my humble opinion, the reasons which Mr. Orton had given on the other side, are so important, that no other ought to be admitted for a minister's being ordained any where but in his own place of worship, or so near it that his own people can attend the service.

You will, in the mean time, I dare say, take the affair into consideration; be well satisfied as to the principles and views with which you undertake the pastoral office; and endeavour, by previous reading, reflection, and prayer, to prepare yourself for such a solemnity. It will be proper to read the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; and the lives of any eminent ministers, and any sermons and charges at ordinations which you have by you; especially your lectures on preaching and the pastoral care; as also to study again the controversy about infant baptism.

I am sensible of the disadvantages attending your situation; but all things considered, I believe there are few that have less; and you may have some advantages to set against them which many ministers want. It is now several months ago that I left for you, with Mr.——, a parcel of books and a commentator or two, which I hoped he would have sent you.

I pray God to establish your health. You will, I hope, take all due precaution for that purpose, and use all imaginable pains to keep up your spirits, to cherish every comfortable view and hope, and banish every thing gloomy and uncomfortable; for "a cheerful heart doth good like a medicine," and prevents many complaints. I heartily wish the success of your labours, and am, dear Sir, Your affectionate friend

And humble servant,

Job Orton.

P. S. The books I left for you were—Whitby on the New Testament, 2 vols. folio; Jenkins on the Truth of the Christian Religion, 2 vols. 8vo. (which is better than most commentaries); Fordyce on the Art of Preaching; Mason on Self-knowledge. Have you either of the following? Craddock's Harmony of the Evangelists; his Apostolical History (an excellent commentator); Tillotson's Sermons, published in his life-time; Scott's Christian Life, 1st vol.; Hammond's Practical Catechism; King's Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church; a Greek Testament with various readings.

LETTER XXXVIII.

April 10, 1772.

Dear Sir,—I am glad you have the Assembly's Annotations. Some things, especially on the Old Testament, are valuable; as the book of Ecclesiastes, which was done by Bishop Reynolds; and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, which were done by the great and learned Gataker. Though rather long and tedious, they contain many excellent remarks and criticisms. As I hope to see you shortly, I will get a few more books ready for you.

I find Mr. Wells has fixed his ordination for May 13. I

cannot by any means advise you to decline a confession of your faith. The people there, indeed, have nothing to do with your faith; but the ministers have a right to know whether a person desirous to be set apart to the ministerial office be a Christian or not. I think you can have no difficulty on this head, as you are under no restraint about expressing what sentiments you please, and in what words you please; and there is as much superstition in opposing some ancient innocent customs, as in being very strenuous for them. Were you to decline a confession, it would occasion many inquiries why; expose you to some censures and suspicions, and be no way to your credit and usefulness. Be as short as you reasonably can. But I think you should upon this occasion bear your testimony to the distinguishing and peculiar doctrines of the gospel; as, the general corruption of human nature—the atonement of Christ—and the necessity of the Spirit's influence, to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort the soul. These you will think it best to express in scripture words. You will see a good model in Mr. Philip Henry's Life.

Mr. Baxter's Directions, relating to private instruction, seem calculated for a parish minister, who has a whole parish for his congregation and charge; and many of them are impracticable in the present day. Nevertheless it is desirable to come as near them as we can. The principal difficulties will be among the richer and politer people; there will be little or none among the poorer sort. But you will soon find, upon trial, what can, and what cannot be done. If I remember right, you have some hints of that kind in my letters to Mr. Clark,* which you will bring with you to Bromsgrove. If you think it best to make a beginning immediately after your ordination, you will be at no loss for a suitable text or two; as Acts xx. 20. Many in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; particularly 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. Also Heb. xiii. 17, and, which I should prefer above all, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13, where the pastor's and the people's duty is at once described.

It would be advisable on the Lord's day, previous to your ordination, to preach on that subject. I preached, on the like occasion, from Acts xiv. 2, 3. Give the people a just and scriptural idea of the nature of ordination; guarding them against false notions of it, and especially pointing out the mutual duty of pastor and people, and the engagements they are respectively under; circumstances which our congregation are either ignorant of, or almost entirely forget.

The main thing previous to this transaction is, to take all due pains with your own heart, by reading what tracts you have on pastoral duty; by meditation and prayer endeavouring to

* The above passage is that referred to in the note, relating to Mr. Clark, page 503 of this volume.

impress your conscience with the importance of it; to make your dedication to the service of Christ in the ministry as solemn and serious as possible, and to engage his presence, assistance, and blessing. You will likewise endeavour to engage the prayers of all your serious people for you and themselves. And if any of them could meet on the ordination day, and spend some time in social prayer, there would be a peculiar propriety and usefulness in it. If in any thing else I can give you any assistance, write to me freely. I shall heartily join my prayers, such as they are, for your assistance, direction, and success.

Endeavour to keep up your spirits, and never indulge to any gloomy and discouraging thoughts.* Difficulties and discouragements you have, and must expect to meet with. So do all your brethren; so did our fathers; so did our adorable Master. But you know his "grace is sufficient," and to that I heartily commend you, being, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and servant.

LETTER XXXIX.

September 7, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad the books came safe to hand and were acceptable. These are only materials; your own diligence and application must put them to the proper use, and reduce them to instruction and edification for your people. I would advise you to go on with your public exposition, and study it carefully, which will be to your advantage as a scholar and a divine, as well as to that of your hearers. I see not why you cannot have a warm pathetic address and application in the course of your exposition, as well as in your sermons. If you keep this in view it will lead you not to trouble your hearers with critical niceties, but content yourself with making the sense plain to them, and impressing the principal duties and motives of the gospel warmly on their hearts.

I entirely approve of your "accommodations of texts," and think this a very useful, as I know it is a very acceptable, way of preaching. Only care should be taken that you do not so accommodate any text, as to lead your hearers' minds away from its true meaning. But in those you mention there is no danger of that. I have lately read a most excellent, serious, and pathetic sermon of Dr. Jortin (a very learned and accurate dignitary of the church), from Lot's address to his son-in-law, "Arise and get thee out of this place," &c. And I heard, a few years ago, an admirable discourse from Acts xii. 20; "Having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace," &c.

* The reader will naturally reflect, how much easier it is to give good advice than to take it.

I am glad to hear of accessions made to your church. May the number of them be increased, and be "such as shall be saved!" Considering the number of your hearers from the establishment, it may not be amiss to give them a sermon on the nature of the Lord's supper and church communion, to lead them to entertain just notions of both, and the connexion between them. If you have Turner's book on Social Religion, it will be a great help to you. If you have not, pray purchase it. It is proper to converse with every one before you admit the person to communion. But you will do it generally and tenderly, so as not to overwhelm and frighten any, making due allowance for their natural weakness and the disadvantages of their education.

Many will come to hear you out of curiosity. But if you preach Christ into their hearts they will not easily leave you. Mr. Bradford* preaches with great acceptance at Oldbury. He was here lately, and I have seldom heard better sermons than his. They were well studied, yet plain, serious, and striking.

Mr. Stedman is at Cheverel, in Wiltshire.† He is a serious, excellent man, is much followed as a preacher, and I hope does much good.

I am sorry to hear of your bringing up blood. You must be careful not to strain your lungs. There is a way of saying striking things without any peculiar strength or elevation of voice, which it is very desirable to attain, for the sake of a minister's own health and ease. But, in general, the lungs strengthen by moderate exercise, and I hope it will be the case with you. I pray God to strengthen you, both in the outer and inner man, for your great work, and give you growing encouragement in it. There is nothing to be done with a slack hand. An aged minister once said, that he always found God smiled upon his labours in proportion to his diligence in studying, and the pains he took in his work. I believe this is more generally the case than even ministers themselves apprehend. Much good indeed is done which they never know any thing of. I shall be glad to hear of your better health and increasing usefulness. I am, &c.

LETTER XL.

November 3, 1773.

Dear Sir,—I had yours of October 28, and I am truly sorry for the difficulties you labour under. I wish it were in my

* A fellow-student of Mr. B—'s, who is now master of the free school at Stretton, his native place.

† Then curate to Dr. Stonhouse, now vicar of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury. Mr. Billingsley's knowledge of him, and esteem for him, arose from their having connexions in the same place. See the note, page 600.

power to give you any relief. It is most unreasonable for the collector of your salary to expect to be paid. You should, if possible, get some one else to do it. Perhaps two may be better than one. It may be best to propose the affair to your people at some public meeting, and take their opinion. Perhaps it was not quite prudent in you to [do what you mention]: * * * would have been more proper.

I do not much wonder that you have difficulties from some persons lately admitted to your communion, as you could not be supposed to know much of their characters, having so lately come amongst them. Persons that come to us from the church, or from the methodists, are seldom prudent and steady. Ministers frequently have a good deal of trouble with some of them. It is best to wait some time, to see what their temper and behaviour are before they are admitted to communion, let them appear ever so honest and well-meaning. But I advise you not to take upon you to suspend any from the Lord's supper without first mentioning the affair to the church at a public meeting, and having their consent. This will take every odium from you, a pastor, in such case, being only the mouth of the church, or a chairman in an assembly, who acts by the direction and with the concurrence of the body. And I hope you will find serious people enough under your care, who will see and own the propriety of suspending or excluding vicious persons from your communion. This manner of proceeding seems expressly required in the New Testament. I hope you will meet with encouragement and success at Dursley, which may, in some measure, over-balance these grievances.

It is, indeed, very discouraging to meet with slights from a people whom one is honestly and laboriously endeavouring to serve in their best interests; and it is very difficult to bear them. But nothing befalls you but "what is common to men," what good ministers have generally met with; and, perhaps, the best and most active have met with the most of this kind of treatment. But it is very desirable not to have too quick a sight; not to suspect slights when, perhaps, none are intended. And it is best not to take notice of those which one cannot but see and feel.

Great prudence and caution are necessary that our "good may not be evil spoken of," and that we may "give no occasion to those who seek occasion" to censure and vilify us. The persons whom you may see it necessary to animadvert upon will be glad to do this, and therefore peculiar watchfulness is necessary. Have you no prudent, experienced minister in the neighbourhood whom you could consult, who has influence among your people, and might excite them [to a better behaviour towards you]? Mr. O., I know, speaks well of you to other people, though he does not fall in with your sentiments.

And I hope others, who may seem to slight you, do not intend it.

You cannot expect politeness and a great degree of good manners from low people and mechanics, and must not look for it. But if you persevere steadily in your work, overlook little matters, endeavour to be friendly and affable with your people, and to promote their best interest, I have no doubt but, by degrees, their behaviour to you will be more worthy and agreeable. Perhaps you expect too much from them, and not receiving it contributes to your uneasiness. Due allowance is to be made for their ignorance, and their not being used to a proper regard to ministers, through their frequent changes. There must be labour, time, and patience, to work any considerable reformation.

Above all, let me entreat you to endeavour, as much as may be, to keep up the cheerfulness of your own spirits, and never to brood over gloomy thoughts and discouraging apprehensions, but leave them all at the throne of grace. Never look upon those as your friends who tell you what weak and prejudiced people may say of you, but rather discourage such reports. Consider him who was evil spoken of, reviled and condemned as a drunkard and a blasphemer, and who "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind." Luther used to say, "Three things make a useful minister; temptation, meditation, and prayer." You have your share of the one; I doubt not but you will adhere to the other two, and may God graciously assist you therein.

Poor * * still continues in a low way, and I fear his congregation suffers on that account, though his [public] services are very acceptable, for want of pastoral visits, and a due attention to children and youth. You have my best wishes and prayers that God would give you wisdom to direct your way, and that firmness and cheerfulness of mind which may bear you above all your discouragements. I am, &c.

LETTER XLI.

August 27, 1774.

Dear Sir,—I received yours yesterday, and truly sympathize with you under all the difficulties and discouragements you meet with from your own state of health, and from the temper of your people. As to the former, I hope you are better upon the whole for your journey, though I fear [your uneasiness of mind] will be unfavourable. As to the latter, I have a cheerful persuasion, that if you follow the rule of the old philosopher, "to bear and forbear," you will find your difficulties gradually lessening.

Many persons are fond of new things, new doctrines, and new methods of address. But if you will set as light as possible by these things, and go on steadily and cheerfully in your work, this little storm will soon be blown over, and you will be at peace. Nothing can please your foolish and unreasonable people more than to see that their conduct grieves and discourages you. (I think this is not an unjust charge against them). By this means they may hope that you will leave them. But if they see that you do not regard them, but make light of their unbecoming behaviour, it will dispose them to treat you better; at least to discontinue their unkind complaints.

It is the misfortune of your temper, or rather bodily constitution, to be too much affected with little things, which a man of firmer strength and better spirits would despise. You have your difficulties and discouragements; and so has every minister, at least every faithful minister. I do not know any of your brethren but what have as many and great from their people as you have. Mr. Fawcett has many more. But he makes light of and despises them all. The best way to treat such unreasonable men is, never to argue with them; for that is making them of too much importance; but to let them see that their behaviour does not affect you, by going on steadily in the path of duty.

Should I hear of any place where you would be likely to be more comfortable and useful, you may depend upon my giving you the earliest intelligence. But I hope you will labour to gain a greater firmness of mind, and a superiority to the little attacks of malice and ill-nature; otherwise you will meet with equal, if not superior difficulties in any other congregation; for there are none without some weak, turbulent, bigoted people.

But if by firmness, resolution, and perseverance, you can silence the present complaint, your situation for the future may be more comfortable and useful than if nothing of this kind had ever happened. I pray God give you prudence and firmness to act in such a manner that you may disarm the unreasonable resentment of your opposers; and I hope he will again unite the hearts of the serious and worthy to you. I am, &c.

LETTER XLII.

Nov. 11, 1774.

Dear Sir,—It gives me great pleasure to hear that your health and spirits are any way recruited, and that you are able to go on so comfortably with your ministerial work. I heartily wish the continuance and increase of that ability, and hope you will strive with all your power against every thing that may tend to depress your spirits, or make your work heavy and uncom-

fortable to you. While there is so much ignorance, bigotry, and corruption among mankind, all faithful ministers will have their trials. I know none who have not such as are nearly, if not entirely, equal to yours. And they who have much better health and spirits than you sometimes bear them worse; and suffer more by them than they who have been used to the painful discipline of affliction, and have been thereby brought to a deep and habitual sense of their own unworthiness, and been enabled to see, and humbly to submit to, the hand of God in other afflictions.

I hope God has yet good work for you to do at Cam; and that you will not dwell on the dark side of things, to which your infirmities, if not your natural temper, may incline you. For I know, by long experience, that when the spirits are broken or weak, little things make too deep and too long an impression. It is our wisdom and duty to strive against this as much as possible, and this is the most likely way to engage the divine pity and help.

The circumstance of your finding relief from the cold bath gives me peculiar pleasure, both as it is an easy remedy (as I know by the experience of above twenty years), and is a proof that your lungs are not so much affected as I feared; else it would have been injurious to you.

I cannot give you any particular reason why you never heard from Bristol. Mr. S. F. preached to the people at Tucker street last summer, and upon Mr. Jane's incapacity they applied to him, but he was engaged at N——. Mr. Fawcett has heard nothing since we wrote.* A settlement in such a place as Bristol would not suit *you*, nor would you suit the people as pastor. But I thought it would have been an advantage to you to have been there for a few weeks, in regard to your health.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

* It appears that, on a benevolent principle, Mr. Orton concurred with Mr. Fawcett in recommending Mr. Billingsley, as a supply, to the congregation then vacant at Bristol, with a view to his obtaining the benefit of the waters there, upon an economical plan. That congregation was afterwards supplied by Mr. James Davies, for whom a new meeting-house was erected in Bridge street, at the opening of which an excellent sermon was preached and printed by his brother Dr. Benjamin Davies. He was succeeded, upon his death, by their present pastor, Mr. Lowell. How long Mr. Billingsley lived after this last letter was written to him doth not appear, nor have I any information concerning the circumstances of his decease.

LETTER XLIII.

TO THE REV. MR. ROBINS,* DAVENTRY.

April 24, 1776.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—I suppose, by what I remember, the Sermons of Dr. Doddridge, [which were in Dr. Ashworth's possession] were only plans and hints, and not written out at length. You will take them into your custody, and make a proper use of them. I am principally concerned about the Sermons against Popery. I have them transcribed into long-hand, and have often been solicited to print them. But all of them, except five or six at the beginning of the series, which were studied with peculiar care, are too imperfect to be printed. But when you come to read them over, you will better judge whether they are fit for the press or not. Probably they might be very useful.†

* The following correspondence with the Rev. Thomas Robins commenced on his undertaking the office of resident and divinity tutor in the academy at Daventry, upon the death of Dr. Caleb Ashworth. He favoured me with the perusal of a great number of letters which he received from Mr. Orton, while he continued in that office; but having laid me under great restrictions with regard to what related to himself, I have refrained from transcribing such passages as might be likely to offend his modesty, and consequently have suppressed the greater part of the correspondence. I have not given a single letter entire, but contented myself with making a few extracts relating to indifferent topics; some of which appeared curious and entertaining, if not very interesting, to those especially who were educated at the seminary over which be presided, and others which seemed adapted for general usefulness.

From the same regard to the delicacy of my much esteemed friend, I forbear in this place to introduce any encomium of mine on his character and talents, or any circumstance relating to his history and connexions; excepting that he was born on my native soil, and so near the town of Bedford, that he often attended, in his youthful days, with his friends, in the same place of worsbip with myself; his father, whom I well knew (a man of sterling sense and exemplary character), being a member of the same church, under the pastoral care of the pious and amiable Mr. Samuel Saunderson, whose name both he and I shall ever venerate.

Since, however, another gentleman, a native of the same place, and not under the same restraint with myself has, in a late printed discourse, borne a respectful testimony to the character and abilities of our common friend, I hope tbat I shall not be thought to transgress the laws of propriety or friendship, in transcribing the passage; wbich is the more honourable to both parties, on account of their avowed difference in religious sentiment.

"In the year 1781, I was appointed by Mr. Coward's trustees tutor of the academy at Daventry, in succession to the Rev. Thomas Robins, who was, in consequence of the loss of his voice, under a necessity of resigning that honourable and important situation, which for several years after tbe death of Dr. Ashworth, he had filled with great reputation, acceptance, and success. The uncommon talents and virtues of this most excellent person, who I trust will pardon me for introducing his name on tbis occasion, can only be exceeded by tbat extraordinary degree of humility and self-diffidence, which, unfortunately for the world, has confined within comparatively a very limited sphere the beneficial influence of those various acquisitions, of that singular facility of communicating instruction, and of that eminent example of rational piety, which, in a more public and conspicuous situation, might have been productive of the most signal benefit to mankind."—Mr. Belsham's Discourse at Hackney, May 5, 1805, on his resignation, &c., note, page 31.

† I bave a copy of them, which I once delivered (with a few omissions and additions) at an evening lecture. I did not perceive any very great inequality in them, excepting that in some of the last, several sentences are not completed.

Are there not some other manuscripts of the doctor's in your hands, which Dr. Ashworth had? particularly his plan of a treatise relating to the Jewish proselytes, which I remember to have sent to Dr. Ashworth. It was very imperfect, but the hints are very important.* Some other papers relating to his academy and lectures he also had, which, as I presume he thought they might be of use to him, you ought also to have.

I have some of the doctor's sermons and plans, which I really know not what to do with. Not one of his family can read them. His unhappy son told me, when I saw him last, that he had quite forgotten his short-hand. It is not desirable that they should go into the hands of one knows not who; yet it is difficult to say what should be done with them.† I wish you would think and consult about this matter.

I have some of his diaries, and other private papers, which were of use to me in composing his life. They are of no use now, and ought not to be seen by any but some of his prudent and faithful friends. And so ill a use had been made of such papers, that I am come to a resolution to destroy them. I presume I shall not be called upon to produce my authorities. I must leave it to you to get the MS. of the Family Exposition,‡ bound up in what way you please. I shall be glad to defray the expence.

I am, &c.

In another Letter, on the same subject, Mr. Orton writes as follows:

As to Dr. Doddridge's papers, he, in his will, expressly left to me his Clark's Bible, and interleaved Testament; and such of his manuscripts as I should select, excepting the copy of his Family Expositor. These are his express words. In consequence of this most noble legacy, I desired Dr. Ashworth to choose what he thought proper. I have very few of his sermons,§ excepting those which had hymns annexed to them,

* Dr. Doddridge intended to publish a translation of the minor prophets, and had made a beginning of that very desirable work. Concerning this he writes to his friend Dr. Wood, Dec. 4, 1750, as follows: "If I live to finish my Exposition on the New Testament, I shall make an attempt on the minor prophets, of which, indeed, I have already begun to make a translation from the Hebrew, for my own entertainment and use."—Letters, p. 304. Having inquired of Mr. Orton concerning it, he wrote me for answer, "I once had it, but it was in short-hand, and if I remember right, it was much blotted, and there were no notes upon it. I gave it to Dr. Ashworth."

† Mr. Orton many years ago made me a present of a small volume of the doctor's, containing a list of texts to be preached upon, with hints for sermons, and memorandums relating to his congregation, &c. all in small short-hand; which I value as a great curiosity, and as a proof of his minute attention to his charge.

‡ Query, What became of it? I remember once seeing it in the hands of the late Dr. Harris; and for neatness in writing, and care in the printer, it was a real curiosity.

§ Dr. Doddridge, in his will, ordered four volumes of his sermons to be published, and several were transcribed into long-hand, which I remember Dr. Ashworth used to

and which I selected in order to transcribe them [the hymns] for the press, and few of his other papers, except such as I thought might furnish me with some materials for writing his life.

I considered, and still consider, the MSS. which Dr. Ashworth had, as my property, and therefore will by no means consent that Mrs. Doddridge should have them; for neither she nor any of her children can read them. I therefore lend them to you; only I shall be glad that when you have done with them, you will get Mr.—— to take a list of them and send it to me, and then I will consider which of them are proper for me to leave by will to you or your library.

LETTER XLIV.

September, 1776.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—I have long been very much dissatisfied with some things in our manner of conducting public worship. Our introductory prayer is [generally] too short, and never seems to impress the heart, or engage the attention of the congregation. It is usually all employed in entreating a blessing on the work before us. It is proper enough to do this, but it seems to me that this first prayer should be chiefly an act of adoration and thanksgiving to God for the creation of the world (to commemorate which the sabbath was first instituted), and also for the resurrection of Christ, which the first day of the week was set apart to commemorate. I think these topics should never be omitted, and that these should be the principal business of the prayer, though a few petitions, in the usual form, for assistance and a blessing, may be added.

Let me also submit it to your consideration, whether the prayers of [most] ministers before sermon are not quite too long; and whether it be easy, or even practicable for serious Christians, especially the infirm and the aged, to keep their attention so engaged, as it should be, for half an hour or longer? I have heard a great many pious souls complain of the difficulty of this. When I hear Mr. Fawcett pray (as he often does in an afternoon) for above half an hour,* entering minutely into particular cases, my spirits are quite jaded; and many others make the same complaint.

Would it not be every way better to divide this prayer into

read to the family on a Saturday evening. What became of these? and why were they not printed?

* Some ministers whom I have known, reckoned to have "a great gift" in prayer, have often prayed full forty minutes, by which they have spoiled rather than promoted the devotion of their own people, and excited a prejudice in others against the extemporary method, who might naturally be tempted to apply the censure of our Saviour upon the Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 14), who "made long prayers."

two? Suppose for instance, after reading the scriptures, a general prayer should follow, of about from ten to fifteen minutes, consisting of adoration, petition, thanksgiving, as usual, suited to the general state of a congregation of worshipping Christians. After this a psalm might be sung, and then a prayer follow entirely intercessory, in which all the usual cases might be introduced; only sometimes for variety's sake, and the better to engage attention, changing the order; beginning with private cases, then proceeding to national interests, and to the case of the church and the world. This would relieve the attention, help Christians to be more serious and devout, and be less fatiguing to ministers. I cannot approve the custom of some, who leave public concerns to the prayer after sermon, as many begin to be tired, and some are obliged to go out.

Give me leave to ask another question. Would it not be desirable to inculcate it upon your pupils to make a large collection of sentiments, phrases, and texts of scripture, proper for the several parts of prayer, and frequently to review them, that they may always have them ready, and so their hearers be pleased and edified by an agreeable variety? Should not this especially be done with regard to the intercessory part of prayer? as many ministers, who have sufficient variety in the other parts of worship, go on with a mere form in this. Human nature is so constituted as to be fond of variety, and this [in devotion] is best for the attention and pleasure, and perhaps for the improvement of the mind.

I often wonder how ministers can satisfy themselves with concluding their public services always with the same benediction, when there is a variety both in the Old and New Testament. The sameness lessens the attention and prevents the good effect of the benediction, so far as that depends upon the devout concurrence of the soul. Indeed it is surprising that dissenting ministers do not, upon their own principles, study a greater variety in all the parts of worship.

I know that you will excuse these hints: make what use of them you think proper. They could be addressed to no one who is a better judge of the propriety of them, or whose station renders him more likely to make them useful to others.

I am, &c.

*** Another letter of friendly advice to this correspondent, concludes thus—I have no apology to make for this freedom but the following: "Ætate parens, meritis discipulus sum."

LETTER XLV.

Dec. 17, 1777

I am loath to send you an empty page, and therefore will prattle a little more, if you will excuse the impertinence of an old man. Perhaps it may amuse you with your pipe,* after the fatigues of the day. I have lately been reading Mr. Winter's Sermons, in which are many judicious and sensible things, but not without some severe sarcastical reflections on his brethren who do not see with his eyes. But I can easily forgive and pass over his censures (though I think some of them fall upon myself) for the sake of this one remark which truth extorted from him, viz. that "matters of the greatest moment, in which our spiritual and eternal interest lies, are the clearest revealed." Here I entirely agree with him; but how he can reconcile this with some of his other assertions, I cannot see, and must leave it to himself. I never could approve his narrowness and bigotry, but have been pleased with the sermons I have heard him preach here, as there were marks of care and study in all of them, though delivered in a heavy disagreeable manner.

If you have not seen Mentor's Letters to Youth, by Edmund Rack, I think you will be pleased with them. I could wish all the young ones under your care to read them attentively. But I am principally a dealer in old books, and I have been reading Rutherford's Letters, and some pieces of the ejected ministers, with great pleasure, and I hope some improvement. I always recommended them to my young friends under your care, and wish they may be more and more conversant with them. There is a knowledge of human nature and of the world, a spirit and a pathos in them, which I find in few modern writers. I am particularly pleased with Scudder's Christian's Daily Walk, which, were I a tutor, I would urge my pupils to read over and over again, as a most useful work for them, both as Christians and ministers. I know that I speak your sentiments, and I hope your pupils will be so humble and so wise as to regard your admonitions upon this head.

Since I began this letter, I have received one from a Lutheran bishop at Riga. He informed me last year of the great increase of the Moravians in that country; and that they had, in some of their publications, represented Dr. Doddridge as their friend and espouser of their cause.† I therefore sent him a copy of the doctor's letter to Count Zinzendorf, expostulating with him

* Mr. Orton himself relished that gratification.

† This doubtless was owing to the favourable attention which the doctor at first paid to the Moravians in England, and the high terms in which he spoke of Count Zinzendorf, whom, in the first edition of the Family Expositor, he styled "the Moses of the age."

for his absurd, ridiculous, and pernicious notions. He now tells me that this sect, which is still increasing, has renounced all these absurdities, and is become more regular and consistent, and more agreeable to their protestant brethren; and that, therefore, he waives printing that letter in High-Dutch, as he proposed otherwise to have done.

He is a great admirer of the works of Doddridge, Watts, and Hervey. He got my Sermons on Eternity translated into High-Dutch, and printed, to be dispersed with them. I wish they may do good in that country and elsewhere. He makes a particular and friendly enquiry about the state of the academy at Daventry, and its tutors, of which, if I live till spring, I shall give him an account, which will excite his pleasure and thankfulness. He writes like a very good man, but is very zealous for the particular tenets which he espouses, and is not disposed to think favourably of the reformed churches, or of our dissenters, or of any but Lutherans [a few excepted]. But we all have our spots and failings. I love to hear of the spread of truth, and holiness, and love, whether in the east or the west, among the Lutherans or Calvinists, or any sect whatever.

LETTER XLVI.

April 11, 1778.

Dear Sir,—I have been much entertained with my townsman Farmer's book against Worthington, and wish that insolent uncharitable writer may be humbled by Mr. Farmer's soft words and hard arguments.*

What is done with your Abridgment of Henry on Baptism? I beg you will not forget it, or neglect to get it ready for the press.†

Mr. Palmer, of Hackney, informed me of good Mr. Wilton's dangerous illness, and on Wednesday I heard of his death. This is an awful and mournful event. I am truly grieved for the loss we have sustained in the removal of so useful a man. But we are only fellow servants, and must submissively leave it

* The piece referred to is entitled Letters to the Rev. Dr. Worthington, in answer to his late publication, entitled An impartial Enquiry into the Case of the Gospel Demoniacs; with an Appendix, consisting of an Essay on Scripture Demonology. Dr. Kippis says, in the Biog. Britan., "The author (Dr. W.) neither preserved his temper, nor added any thing to his reputation."—"These letters exhibit a clear and judicious epitome of what had already been advanced in the course of this controversy, and contain much more new matter than might have been expected upon a subject which the author had already so amply discussed."—Memoirs of Mr. Farmer, p. 59.

† Mr. Matthew Henry left in manuscript a Treatise on Baptism, very similar to his Treatise on the Lord's Supper, and of equal length. Mr. Robins, who had it in his possession, was urged to undertake an abridgment of it; which he executed with great judgment, so as to retain every thing important, and omit only what was redundant, and

to our great Master to call home his servants when and how he pleases. This world and the church is full of mysterious providences, one of which is, that such a useful man as the doctor should be removed in the prime of his days, and I, a poor old worthless creature, should be continued here. But I hope God will accept my desires and fervent endeavours to do good, and that he will raise up faithful labourers for his harvest. I bless God that, with all my infirmities, I am not inclined to despair of the commonwealth, but trust in the care and vigilance of the great Head of the church, that he will raise up instruments to support his cause.

I can hardly refrain from chiding you for getting into your old complaining strain, when God is honouring you with growing acceptance and usefulness; when your character and esteem as a tutor are continually rising [but the editor's pen must be restrained]. Labour, dear sir, to keep up your courage, to have faith in God, and may he "strengthen your heart."

I am, &c.

LETTER XLVII.

March 20, 1780.

Dear Sir,—As you mention Mrs. Robins's intended visit to Bath, I cannot satisfy myself without sending you a line to express my sincere desire and prayer that she may have "a prosperous journey by the will of God," and come home greatly recruited, and better fitted for the duties of her important station. I know what Bath is. I know many things there will be disagreeable and uncomfortable to her. But she will have nothing to do with the hurries and follies of the place. It may be an amusement to see and hear something of them; but it is rather affecting to a serious spirit to see so many immortals trifling away and murdering their time, and sacrificing every valuable object to the vanities and follies of this life.

Pray take all possible care of your lungs, and work them for the present as little as ever you can. Remember it was pressing too much upon his, when they were weak and inflamed, that de-

thus in fact to improve the work, as I can testify by a comparison of the original and the abridgment in manuscript, which was published in the year 1783. But, like many other useful works, it did not meet with the encouragement it deserved, for want of being sufficiently known.

This was the only work which Mr. Robins could be prevailed on to print, excepting some Memoirs of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Strange, minister of Kilsby, near Daventry; one of the wisest and best of men. This was done on my earnest solicitation, and was inserted in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, vol. iii. And those who are the best judges on such a subject, and who best knew Mr. Strange, will concur with me in pronouncing this so excellent a performance as to render it a matter of deep regret, that the same pen should have been employed in no other original composition.

prived the world so soon of our excellent tutor.* Use as much exercise, and keep as much in the air, when the weather is favourable, as you can. But beware of exposing yourself to cold air, especially after preaching or lecturing. As your ride to Bedford was serviceable to you, I hope you will keep to Dr. Sydenham's frequent advice to weakly patients, "R. caballum."

I shall send you Perkins's Works as soon as I can. I do not expect, or indeed desire, any of your pupils to read them through; but there are some tracts in them well worth their reading. His style was the best of any I have seen in Queen Elizabeth's reign. I read them over a few winters ago, and, as usual, marked with my pencil some passages which I thought worth attention, which may be a guide to your young men, as far as my judgment has weight.

I have been thinking of sending you, for your library, Tallents's Tables. When Dr. Doddridge read us lectures in history, Tallents was his text. I have a set of the plates in very good order at your service. There is this to recommend them, that they are the author's own copy, with many corrections and additions which he made with his pen (for I well know his hand,)† and the history is continued in manuscript nearly to the time of the author's death. In this view it is a curiosity.

I am glad to hear that Mr. Humphrys ‡ has joined with his brethren in their social meetings for prayer, &c., and I hope he will continue to be upon the most friendly terms with them. I rejoice that he goes on comfortably and acceptably at Bromwich. One P——, who calls himself an Independent, and had set up a new meeting at W——, has been dismissed by his congregation for his immoralities. I wish it may tend to cure our dissenters of their fondness for these eccentric preachers, of whom they know little or nothing.

You have probably seen a defence of Mr. Fawcett's book on the Trinity, entitled Christian Catholicism defended. It has set our good friend's mind at ease. It is an excellent well written book, and will be very mortifying to those warm people who do not like Mr. Fawcett's moderation. I should imagine, by some peculiarities in the style, as well as the general strain of it, that it is written by S. P——.§ However it does great honour both

* To this instance many more might have been added. A recent and very affecting one was that of the excellent Mr. Pearce, of Birmingham. The above wise caution of Mr. Orton cannot be too carefully attended to, especially by zealous and popular ministers. The case of his correspondent strongly enforces it, the original cause of whose incapacity for public service was, his yielding to the indiscreet and cruel solicitations of his friends to preach three times in the large congregation at Kettering when he had a violent cold upon him.

† He was minister of Shrewsbury, and one of the ejected in 1662.

‡ Mr. Robins's successor at West-Bromwich, since removed to London.

§ Mr. Orton was not very wide of the mark. This piece was written in answer to a pamphlet against Mr. Fawcett, known to be the work of Mr. William Fuller, though anonymous. A very shrewd, but uncandid performance, calculated to misrepresent Mr.

to the author and to Mr. Fawcett. I wish it had not been quite so diffuse; but I hope it will be read and do much good. Yet I have no hope that it will silence his warm opponents, who will have the last word.

I am, dear Sir, your affectionate friend
And humble servant,
JOB ORTON.

P. S. Tired with writing, I went to my couch, and took up one of my favourite writers, Bolton; who quotes a passage from the writings of King James the First, in which he says, "I am sorry for, and much condemn, a light affected kind of preaching, which hath of late years been too much taken up in the university, city, and country; in which there is a show of much reading, and a display of their own wit," &c. Let us not say, "The former times were better than these;" but endeavour to make these as good as we can.

LETTER XLVIII.*

TO MR. J—— V——, LEICESTERSHIRE,

Salop, Jan. 10, 1762.

DEAR SIR,—Your observation on the unseemly posture of dissenters about you, in time of prayer, is very just. I look upon it as very indecent and unbecoming. I have often seen it in your present neighbourhood, have often reproved it, both in public and private, and never could hear any good reason given for it, except in case of age and infirmities. Kneeling is certainly the most proper gesture. It was used by holy men of old, by Solomon, Daniel, and by Christ and his apostles: and though the heart is what God chiefly looks at, yet as we are composed of body and spirit, we ought to glorify God with both. Such external marks and expression of reverence, as are customary to superiors, ought certainly to be used in our address to the Most High.

Fawcett, and the design of his publication. The object of the above answer was not to defend any human system, but to show the room there is for mutual candour among the several parties of Christians; particularly by proving "that there is not that real difference among them in sentiment, which their different modes of speech lead them to suppose, but that so far as ideas are concerned, they are more united than they apprehend." Mr. Fuller replied, with much artifice, and not without some gross misrepresentations, which were pointed out in An Appeal to a candid and orthodox Minister, &c., and there the matter ended; so that in this case the defendant "had the last word." The two opponents frequently met afterwards, without knowing each other as such, and with apparent good humour.

* This letter is inserted in this place merely because, according to the date, it is the first of four excellent ones which appeared in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, and which there seemed to be a propriety in placing together. It is found in No. 36 of that periodical work, December 1796. The letter was occasioned by the complaint of a correspondent, respecting a very common but indecent custom among dissenters in his neighbourhood, viz. *sitting* in the time of public prayer.

Standing is [one] proper posture for prayer, and there are several hints in scripture which intimate that it was used among the Jews, but nothing can be alleged in favour of sitting, but weakness.

It is indeed said in one place (1 Chron. xvii. 16), that "David went in and sat before the Lord," which is the only place in scripture which I ever heard brought to countenance the lawfulness of sitting. But it is to be considered that the words may as properly be rendered, "continued before the Lord;" but I think the case was this: the ancient form of adoration and worship among the nations of the east was, first to kneel down, and then sit upon the feet, bending the head to the ground; and this I believe was David's posture.

It will be very proper for you to inquire the reasons of this unseemly conduct, and therefore I give you my thoughts upon it. I fear it is principally owing to this: the want of true, at least lively, devotion in the heart, and not sufficiently considering that the minister is their mouth in addressing God, and that they ought to join in it as much as if it were their own prayer.

I fear too many among the dissenters only attend to *hear the minister pray;* to judge of, and either commend or condemn, his performance, without considering their own concern in it, and their duty to join in it.

This has furnished the enemies of free prayer with an objection against it; but this is really no more an objection against free prayer, than it is an objection against preaching. It is the fault of persons [themselves], not of the method of prayer; and those are much to blame, who give such as speak against free prayer an occasion to speak evil of it, since it was evidently the method used by our Lord, his apostles, and the first Christians for several ages, and we think best adapted to answer the end of prayer, and promote piety, holiness, and sincerity in the heart.

I bless God, I am as well as usual at this season of the year. I find myself less able to bear cold and fatigue; but I desire to be thankful that I am able to go on with my public work. "If I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labour, to serve the Lord Christ" and those precious souls for whom he died. "And it is my earnest expectation and hope that he will be magnified in my body, whether by life or death." Continue your prayers for me, that God would strengthen me for my work and succeed me in it; give me a much larger experience of the gospel upon my own heart; and make me more meet for that better world, where we hope to be for ever with one another and with the Lord. Believe me to be, with great sincerity, dear Mr. V——,

Your affectionate and faithful friend,

And humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

*** It deserves consideration whether the almost universal practice of the dissenters, of sitting during the singing of the divine praises, be not equally indecent and censurable with that of sitting in prayer; since the one is as much an act of worship as the other. A pamphlet has been lately published on this subject, and copies of it presented to the ministers in and about London, to engage their exertions for effecting a reform in this matter; and it is worthy the serious attention of all devout worshippers.

LETTER XLIX*.

TO A STUDENT AT THE ACADEMY.

Dear Sir,—I am truly glad to find that your situation in the academy is so comfortable, and your nearest associate so agreeable; but you must be careful not to be sanguine. We are not to expect the long continuance of any comfort upon earth, except what arises from religion. The present is a new scene to you, and therefore gives you pleasure. But I hope and believe your pleasure in it arises more from your desire and prospect of usefulness, than the novelty of the scene. Difficulties and discouragements are to be expected in every part of life, as a trial of our virtue, and an exercise of those graces that are suited to the present state. You will allow me, with the tenderness and freedom of a father and a friend, to give you such hints of caution and advice, as may be serviceable to you. My having been above eight years at an academy, as a pupil and a tutor, gives me some advantages for writing on this subject, which others, who are my superiors in worth and knowledge, have not.

You will not wonder that the first thing I commend to your regard, and charge you, as my dear son, to attend to, is respecting the concerns of vital religion, and the progress of the divine life in your soul. I have known some students so intent upon learning and study, as to neglect their own souls, or not to pay such regard to their best interest as they ought to have done. This is a fatal, destructive error, and I hope that, through the experience you have had of divine things, and the power of al-

* This letter was first published in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine for September 1797, No. 46. The date of it is not specified, nor does it appear to whom it was addressed. But it is obvious that the pupil was at Daventry academy, and that he had but lately entered on his course of studies. From the close of the letter it is also evident that it was written from Shrewsbury, some time before Mr. Orton had resigned the pastoral charge of that congregation, to which this pupil appears to have belonged. It is to be regretted that no subsequent letters from the same pen, to this academic, have been communicated. The two following ones, however, addressed to another, at the same seminary, and extracted from the same periodical work, will in some measure supply the deficiency, and may most properly be inserted in this place.

mighty grace, you will never fall into it. Let the scriptures be daily read in a practical view, not merely to understand their meaning, but to attend to your own concern in them, and feel their power on your own heart, enlightening your understanding, warming your affections, restraining you from sin, and quickening you to every duty.

Let secret prayer be scrupulously and conscientiously performed, and let no application to study prevent your aspiring after fixedness and fervour in your daily addresses to God. Remember, you will neither be acceptable nor useful in the ministry, whatever other furniture you may attain, without a devotional spirit, and an habitual sense of God upon your mind. In order to improve the divine and heavenly nature in your soul, you will be serious and devout in attendance upon family worship, and public ordinances, especially the Lord's Supper.

If your tutors, or occasional preachers, or any of the pupils, either in the pulpit or family, are, in any respect, different in their sentiments, or their method or language of praying and preaching, from what you have been used to, or what you may quite like, I must desire, and allow me to add, *charge* you, that you never find fault with it, or express any contempt or dislike. This will betray such vanity and conceit as, I hope, you will never be chargeable with; lessen your character; raise you up enemies; and you may expect a return of such treatment, when you come to appear in a public character, or lead the devotions of the family. Your business is to get good by every one on whose preaching you attend, or in whose prayers you join. To be nice and delicate, even about spiritual provision, is a sign of a sickly unhealthy soul.

If there is among the pupils, as in my time there was, a periodical religious society to strengthen each others' hands in God, I could wish you might be a member of it; but put not yourself forward in it till you are better acquainted with them and their method. Remember, in this and in every other case, modesty and diffidence is the great ornament of youth, and we ought to "esteem others better than ourselves;" but these are peculiarly becoming and necessary for you, considering that you have gone to the academy with less furniture of some kinds, than perhaps, any pupil there.

Maintain always the highest regard for your tutors: treat them with the utmost respect, and pay a constant attention to their instructions, even those that may seem to be least important; and if they are pleased to treat you with friendship and some degree of familiarity, let not that lessen, but increase your veneration and esteem for them. Easily submit to, and follow their advice in the course of your studies, as to the books you should read, and every other instance of conduct. Comply punctually with the rules and orders of the family, and never, if possible,

be a moment beyond the time fixed for rising, prayers, lectures, meals, or public worship.

Endeavour to appear, and to that end always *be*, well pleased with the provisions and accommodations of the house, and never join in any complaint if every thing is not just to your mind. I have seen a great deal of this bad spirit; but I remember it was generally found in persons who came out of the poorest families and places. It is a mean and base spirit, utterly unbecoming a Christian, and more still a candidate for the Christian ministry. You do not go to the academy to eat and drink, but to learn, study, and improve in qualifications for usefulness in life; and it is good for young ministers to learn and practise self-denial, and to be content with plain things, especially young ministers among the dissenters, who, many of them, live better at the academy than they must expect to do again. You will be civil and friendly to the servants, avoiding all familiarity with them, giving them as little trouble as possible, and doing as much for yourself as you can.

As to you fellow-pupils, you will be civil and kind to them all; respectful and friendly in your behaviour; and familiar only with those by whom you are most likely to improve in knowledge, and goodness. I know not what character you may have had of the pupils of your seminary; those of them who have come out into the ministry, and whom I have known, have been, as far as I could judge, men of real piety, acceptable and useful preachers. In such a number there may be some who may not be so serious and regular as it is to be wished; but you will be very careful not so much as to suspect the faith and piety of any of them, unless you see something in them evidently inconsistent with the gospel. You will also make due allowance for the weakness and inexperience of youth, and consider that there may be a principle of religion in the heart, though some youthful vanities and follies may conceal it.

I have nothing to say as to the course of your studies; your tutors will direct you; only I must exhort you to observe their directions, and to set out with a firm undaunted resolution to break through the difficulties that will lie in your way. Be not discouraged by the difficulties you may find in learning the languages. Diligence, patience, and time, will do great things. You will find it of great importance to be well acquainted with them, though it is not the most essential qualification of a minister. God can "out of the mouth of the babe and suckling ordain strength." But we have no reason to expect he will favour us with assistance, and honour us with usefulness, without diligence and close application. Be careful to pursue your studies in a regular manner, and avoid hurrying on to the more advanced parts of science, before you are well grounded in its principles. But here, likewise, your tutors will direct you better than I;

and I hope and believe you will take kindly, be thankful for, and act agreeably to, any admonitions they may give you, as to your studies, temper, and behaviour.

It is a matter of great importance for you to attend to the care and preservation of your health, to which a sedentary life may be injurious, and considering that some of your family have been consumptive. Without this care your days may soon be cut short, or your improvement and usefulness prevented. It must therefore be your resolute care to keep your body as upright as possible, when you read and write; never stoop your head nor bend your breast. To prevent this, you should get a standing desk, or some contrivance of this kind, by which you may keep your body upright. I used to put one or two of my books on the table or desk in my study, which raised it to a sufficient height, and by taking them away I could sit or stand alternately, as I was tired of either posture.

You must walk out as often as you can, and especially up and down the hills about you; and that you may not lose the time you spend in walking, endeavour to get one or two of your fellow-pupils to walk with you, by whose conversation you may improve; and let your conversation be upon the subject of your last lecture, by which your judgment will be assisted, and the things you have heard and read be fixed upon your memory.

Your next attention must be to your voice, that you do not contract a thick, low, mumbling way of speaking. You know how much a minister's acceptableness and, consequently, usefulness, depends upon his voice and manner of speaking. To assist you herein, it will be proper sometimes to read aloud, and request your tutor, or some judicious friend, to inform you of any false accent, or pronunciation, that you may early guard against them. Be careful not to imitate others (except it is just and proper) in their way of speaking; all imitations are disagreeable, unless they appear not to be imitations, i. e. to be quite natural. Take pains to attain a free open way of speaking, without any thing like clipping words and syllables, [as also] without affectation and whining. I mention this so particularly, because I have known some students, even in the first year of their course, contract a bad habit, which they could never conquer afterwards. Your greatest danger will be from a thick mincing way of speaking; cluttering your words together, without keeping them at a due distance, and giving them their proper emphasis.

Your next concern, and indeed it is a very important one, is frugality and good economy. You ought to be particularly upon your guard, as your friends have charged you with some instances of extravagance in laying out your money. Let them now see that you are as careful as possible. In order to this, you will take care of your clothes, linen, shoes, &c. When they want mend-

ing, get them done in time, before they grow irreparable, or cost more money to repair them than they are worth. When you send your linen to be washed, write down every article you send, and compare it with the account when it is brought back, and give the washerwoman, on a bit of paper, a copy of the particulars, and the marks of your linen, that she may bring you your own, and neither lose nor exchange any. Get a little pocket-book, and make an account of every sum you receive, of what you took with you, and of every penny you lay out in any way. By this you will be able to estimate your expences, and see, in a little time, whether it be necessary to retrench, and in what instances you can best do it. Be sure never to be in debt to any tradesmen, but pay as you go on, and then you can better calculate your expences. It is the character of a good man that he "guides his affairs with discretion." "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished."

To neglect a due frugality, will be not only imprudent, and grievous to your friends, but will be unjust, as you must have some assistance from the charitable donations of others to help you through the whole of your education. In this view join in no parties for journeys of pleasure, which are very expensive and very unprofitable. It is an idle curiosity which ought not to be gratified, at least not in the first years of your course. If you are solicited by any of your fellow-pupils thereto, it is sufficient to answer, that your circumstances will not admit of it. It has likewise been usual, in an academy, to make parties for tea-drinking in an afternoon; here also be very cautious. Except you can meet with a particular person or two whose conversation will be improving, it will be better to decline these, because they are very expensive, and waste a deal of time, which might be much better employed in your study.

In this connexion, I must caution you against contracting acquaintance in the town. You will have enough in the family; and your time ought to be doubly precious to you, considering how much work you have before you, and how much time and pains it will require to be upon a level with the lowest class of your fellow-pupils. Remember this one caution of a Jewish writer, which is applicable to religion, frugality, employment of time, and every thing that is important and valuable; "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little."* I have seen so many young men ruined, or who have brought themselves into difficulties, straits, and disgrace, by not attending to this plain maxim, that I make no apology for pressing it so much.

One great objection of your friends against your present pursuit was, the fickleness of your temper; you will therefore take

* Ecclus. xix. 1.

pains to keep steadily to the business on which you are entered, and show them that their apprehensions were groundless.

Carry this continually in your thoughts, that you are intended for the ministry, and let all your studies and schemes be directed that way. In this view endeavour to cherish and improve your gifts. At your secret devotion, when you have read some portion of scripture, review and think over the most devotional striking passages, and in your following prayers pray them over, and endeavour at once to impress them on your memory and your heart, by addressing to God your sentiments and desires, in the language of his word which you have been reading. This will store your mind with the most suitable expressions for prayer, as well as tend more effectually to answer the end of prayer, in the improvement of your graces and in engaging the blessing of heaven. As your studies, so your prayers, are to be directed to your work as a minister. You will daily pray that God would enlighten your understanding, and strengthen your memory, enable you to discern the truth, keep you from error both of judgment and practice, and, by his blessing on your studies, make you "a man of God, thoroughly furnished for every good work."

As you are beginning the study of geography, be careful to find every country and important place in the map, and make the situation familiar to your mind, which you will find of great use in understanding the bible and other histories. You will read some practical divinity every day, to improve you as a scholar and a Christian.

You will keep this letter by you, and review it now and then, that as new circumstances and occasions arise, you may act agreeably to the ideas I give, as far as you think them right and proper. In cases where you may see reason to act differently from my hints, I must desire and hope you will take your tutor's advice.

I have nothing to add but my sincere and fervent prayers, that God would bless you indeed, and keep you from evil, direct and prosper you in all your studies, make you a comfort to your aged mother, relations, and friends, and especially to me, and a great blessing to the church. I desire and hope you will daily pray for me, as you know the difficulties and fatigues with which I go through the few services I am capable of performing; and pray for the church to which you have stood related, that God would add to us such as shall be saved, and increase the zeal, piety, and usefulness of all that belong to us.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and humble servant,

JOB ORTON

LETTER L.*

TO MR. JOSEPH JEVANS, AT THE ACADEMY, DAVENTRY.

April 29, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—I shall be glad to give you any assistance in my power in the course of your studies; but there is no question concerning which you could desire my thoughts, that I am less capable of solving or giving you any light into, than the question you propose.† Indeed it is a subject I never did understand, and I believe never shall understand while I am in this world. It is the most intricate subject in the sciences, and I remember Milton, when he would describe the employment of the fallen angels, represents them as arguing and debating about free-will, free-agency, necessity, &c., &c., and represents them as "in endless mazes lost." I [formerly] studied the controversy as carefully as I could, and read the books which then had been written upon it. But I never could get clear and distinct ideas upon the subject. I found insurmountable difficulties on both sides of the question, and could by no means solve some very puzzling queries, that the patrons of each side might and did suggest. I never found so much satisfaction on the subject, as since I read Beattie, as he doth not puzzle me with nice scholastic distinctions; but refers me to my own feelings. And if I may trust them, I think I may be sure I am a free agent.

I have another conviction of it, which is indeed a painful one; a consciousness of having, in innumerable instances, "done those things which I ought not to have done," and which I had power not to do, and having "left undone those things which I ought to have done," and which I had power to do. While I feel my "conscience accusing" me in some instances and "excusing" me in some others (which is you know the apostle's language, and his proof of the knowledge and the guilt of the heathen, who had no express revelation), I can no more doubt that I am a free agent, than I can that I exist. And while I feel this sensation within me, the objections against free agency all vanish, though I can by no means answer all the subtle arguments that may be brought in favour of necessity.

* This letter and the following, written to Mr. Jevans, while he was a student at Daventry, whither he went from Kidderminster, under Mr. Orton's patronage, he himself inserted in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine (Nos. 9 and 62), but without his name. On being applied to for such letters of Mr. Orton as he might have in his possession, which he should judge fit to be added to the present collection, he informed me that these were written to himself, and that he had no objection to have them printed with his name prefixed; "esteeming it an honour to stand in such a relation to Mr. Orton." He at the same time sent me the following original letter, to be inserted, written to him after he became minister at Bloxham, where he succeeded the worthy and learned Mr. Brabant, and where he still continues.

† That relating to liberty and necessity.

I cannot possibly conceive how a holy God can punish sinners, or how they can feel anguish and remorse of conscience, if they are any way, or by any superior agent, necessarily determined to act as they do. The whole scheme of the gospel, which supposes and addresseth us as guilty creatures, depends upon this. For where there is no self-agency, no power in man to act otherwise than he doth, I cannot see how he can be chargeable with guilt, any more than a beast or a piece of matter, which is acted upon.

I never read Edwards's book* (though I have seen extracts from it), and I suppose never shall. I bought and read his tract upon Religious Affections, which I did not understand.† And how that can be important, fundamental, and essential to religion, which a plain and unlearned man cannot understand, is to me a mystery. And indeed the supposition is absurd in itself, and contrary to all our natural ideas of God, and the account which the scriptures give us of him, agreeable and correspondent to these. I see not how God can be the moral governor of the world, and as the judge of the earth do right, if his creatures could not do otherwise than they do. How God foreknows future contingencies I know not, neither is it my business to inquire. A great deal depends upon the idea you affix to the word "contingency," and perhaps most of the difficulties attending this controversy have been owing to the use of words to which various and even contradictory ideas may be and have been fixed, and arguing and disputing on both sides without clear ideas. I apprehend what immediately influences our temper and practice is a general and clear idea, that God knows all things, and will bring every work into judgment. There I must rest.

You will never have occasion, and I hope never have inclination, to bring this controversy into the pulpit; nor do I apprehend that the determining of it so much affects the leading truths of the gospel as some have supposed. I have known many, who were in the scheme of necessity, but I never could conclude it from their sermons and prayers. These were expressed in such a manner as plainly to intimate that man was a free agent. Dr. Watts's Essay on the Freedom of Will in Creatures is a good piece, and deserves your careful perusal and study. Collins, as far as I understand him, shuffles egregiously.—I presume I have left you as much in the dark as before. But now my faculties

* Jonathan Edwards of America, on the Freedom of the Will. A very elaborate, yet perspicuous performance.

† This appears to me very surprising. Some parts of this book may be rather abstruse and tedious; but on the whole it is not only an intelligible but a judicious and useful performance. It contains many observations with which Mr. Orton, if he had duly attended to and recollected them, must have been highly pleased; being calculated to expose some wild imaginations, in a certain class of religious people, which he often censured. Dr. Gordon published a good abridgment of this book, which perhaps might have pleased him better than the original, and is certainly better for the generality of readers.

begin to fail me, I am scarce fit to write upon any subject, much less one so abstruse as this. I think upon the whole, every man's reason and experience and feelings will teach him that he is a free agent, and no man would think otherwise, except he had some metaphysical notions put into his head.

Is it not something strange, that Edwards and Dr. Priestley (whose schemes of divinity are toto cœlo different) should both be champions, strenuous champions, for necessity? But thus etremes meet. And you will often see reason to remark this, as you proceed in the course of your studies. When you meet with such texts as these, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel," —"I would have gathered you but ye would not,"—"Ye will not come unto me," &c., and all those where the ruin of sinners is charged upon themselves, think what an idea we must entertain of God and his word, if men have not a natural liberty to hear and to obey, and some kind of moral liberty too. But enough of this dry subject.

The manner in which you write pleases me much, and especially the modesty with which you propose the difficulties which press upon you. Such studies and difficulties have great use in opening the mind, and preventing conceit and confidence. They read us daily lessons of humility and self-diffidence, and the necessity of earnest prayer to the Father of lights, that he would open our understanding, guide us into truth, and keep us from error on the right hand and on the left.

I am,
Your sincere friend and servant,
JOB ORTON.

LETTER LI.

TO MR. JEVANS, BLOXHAM.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you heartily for your last letter, which sickness and many engagements hindered me from answering before. You are (as some of the Northamptonshire Christians used to say) "greatly carried out." But I must be short, and write as my strength will bear.

Your remarks upon the composition of sermons are, upon the whole, just; but I have no notion of the great usefulness of a sermon without heads and divisions. They should be few and distinct, and not coincide. But a general harangue, or a sermon with a concealed division, is very improper for the generality of hearers, especially the common people, as they can neither remember it, nor so well understand it. You know my own method, and you will see some excellent things upon this subject, in Dr. Watts's Improvement of the Mind, especially the second part.

If others think your style sometimes rises to the bombast, and they are good judges, you should be solicitous to guard against it. I scarcely know a worse writer, as to style and manner, than Davies, of Virginia. His language is various; sometimes highly poetical, and seems to be verse run mad. Sometimes he is in the clouds, and common readers cannot understand him. At other times he is not only plain, as every sermon-writer should be, but even low.* Where there is a strong imagination, it should be carefully restrained. A sermon cannot be too plain, if it be not low.

I know not a better pattern for preaching than Jortin, though in some instances he is too general. He wants more application; more life and spirit in it; else he says the most spiritual, pertinent, excellent things, in the plainest and most familiar manner; so that the hearers of the lowest understanding may take them in. Mr. Bourn, of Birmingham, is another instance of this. A minister should never labour for words, but write down his thoughts as he would express them in conversation, and when he comes to review his sermon, correct what he thinks improper or irregular. Do not stifle a glowing flame, but keep it within bounds, and let it burn clear and bright. If it be too violent, it will scorch and not warm; or else it will produce so much smoke, as to be dark and unintelligible. Labour to be always master of yourself and your subject, and to express your ideas in the clearest manner. How would you talk to a common person upon his religious interests? That is the proper way of preaching to such an audience. If we were to *talk* to the people, we should do more good; for what is preaching but talking to them? Only care should be taken to talk sensibly, without levity; and gravely, without trifling, or high sounding words and unintelligible phrases. Take your divine Master for a model, and see in what strain he talked to the people; nothing low, nothing bombast, nothing above their capacity, every thing suited to their abilities and feelings.

When I recommend "old authors" to you, I always except their obsolete words and phrases, and the peculiarities of their day, in their style and manner. You cannot read too many of our old divines. I particularly refer to those in the beginning of the last century. Had Mr.—— read more of them, it is probable his style would have been better, and his language more easily understood. You may avoid their low phrases, but you will be always careful to distinguish between what is plain and what is low.

I wish the Daventry pupils had more life, and that they would study the art of speaking more. They do this very much at Warrington; but then they are too dry and philosophical in

* Mr. Davies's sermons were posthumous, and Dr. Gibbons, the editor, did not show his judgment in selecting them.

their compositions, and do not come home to men's consciences, as every minister should do. He that hath taken much pains to get his own heart impressed with his subject and arguments, and preached his materials to himself before he gets into the pulpit, is most likely "to speak as he ought to speak," and to do good to his hearers. I wish you to consider this matter carefully, and labour to keep the medium between being too high and too low. Talk to the people, but talk what is sensible and to the purpose. Always do it in a serious manner, and with great tenderness. Labour after a soft insinuating address, and be moved *yourself* with the great importance of what you say. I hope you will thoroughly understand my meaning, and find some advantage by considering these hints. Mr. Flavel says, "The devil is very busy with ministers in their studies, tempting them to lofty language, and terms of art above their hearers' capacities. Thus they paint the glass, but keep out the light thereby." I have read of an aged minister, who, though comparatively weak in abilities, and defective in his manner of address, yet always spoke of divine things, especially those of the life to come, with such wonderful reverence and seriousness, that he did much more good than other ministers of stronger parts and better education.

This I could wish you to keep in remembrance.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend, and humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER LII.

TO THE REV. MR. JEVANS, AT BLOXHAM, OXFORDSHIRE.

November 21, 1780.

DEAR SIR,—The death of our worthy friend Mr. Fawcett has engaged much of my thoughts, and given me less ability to write to my friends than usual. His case was from the first desperate, and the doctor gave little or rather no hope of his recovery. His dropsy increased upon him continually, principally in the lower parts, without much affecting his breath. His case was very grievous,* though [in the last stage of his disorder] he was seldom in much pain. His spirits were generally so low that he could scarcely bear the conversation of his most intimate friends, and when any of them prayed with him he desired them to be very short. At last he could not bear it at all. So great a change did sickness make in a worthy man, who used before to think one could not have too much of a

* He had suffered excruciating pains, which he bore with great patience and submission.

good thing. I sat with him a short time a few hours before his death. His mind was always composed, and his hope comfortable, but he did and could say very little. His bladder was worn through by an ulcer, but no stone in it as was supposed.

He was interred the Monday following. Mr. Parminter,* the curate, Dr. Johnstone, and Mr. Symonds [the apothecary], preceded the corpse. The six deacons were pall-bearers; his two sons, brother, and nephew, were mourners. Then about eighty of the congregation, all in mourning habits, followed, and about twenty of the lower people closed the procession. A prodigious crowd of spectators attended. The church was more crowded than ever was known. The singers, of their own accord, gave a funeral anthem on the occasion. Every thing was conducted decently.† The family were at no expense.

Mr. Cole, of Wolverhampton, preached two excellent sermons, on the Lord's day, on 2 Cor. iv. 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c., which affected me much, as I had preached here on that text the Lord's day before Mr. Fawcett came and opened his ministry here, in 1745.

Mr. Tayler preached the funeral sermon [on the following sabbath] to a most crowded auditory, from Rom. xii. 11; "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." An excellent sermon; in which he gave him a just and honourable character. It is hoped he will print it.‡ The trustees have met to settle preliminaries about choosing a successor; but whom they have in view I know not. I took several journeys to Kidderminster, and wrote many letters to bring Mr. Fawcett here; but now I am nothing. A new generation is sprung up "who know not Joseph." However I heartily wish their com-

* The minister who supplied the congregation during Mr. Fawcett's illness. See page 594.

† These circumstances afford a pleasing proof of the great respect in which Mr. Fawcett was held by his neighbours of the establishment, and consequently of the moderation with which he had conducted himself towards them; a temper which cannot be too warmly inculcated on dissenters. But, consistently with this observation, it may be remarked, that it is rather surprising that in such a place as Kidderminster, and several others where there are large bodies of dissenters, they should not have a burying ground of their own. This would not only be more convenient, and more consistent in persons who object to certain clauses in the burial service, but more respectful to the church, and to the clergy, some of whom may dislike, and even conscientiously scruple officiating at the death of persons who never attended on them in their lives. See on this subject the preface to a sermon entitled Mausoleum Sacrum, at the opening of a new burying-ground in St. Thomas's Square, Hackney.

‡ The Rev. Mr. Thomas Tayler, minister of Carter Lane, London, who had been assistant tutor to Dr. Ashworth in the academy at Daventry, and afterwards chaplain to Mrs. Eliz. Abney. He was a native of Kidderminster, where he had many friends who naturally looked to him for his assistance on this occasion. But though he highly gratified them by preaching this sermon, he disappointed them by deferring, and at length declining, the publication of it. He has however been lately prevailed upon to give them a copy of it, to be annexed to Mr. Fawcett's Grand Inquiry, and a few separately printed have been presented to his friends. Mr. Tayler has also favoured the public with a volume of his sermons, on subjects which are particularly calculated for usefulness in the present day.

fortable settlement, and shall be glad to do what I can to promote it. The family is as well and comfortable as can be expected. Mr. Fawcett had just completed his sixty-fifth year.

The death of my good friend, whom I had known longer than any other person in Kidderminster (except his brother), much affected me with deep concern for his family and flock, and with wonder that such a worthless creature as I should be spared, while he, so useful and active a man, should be cut down. I wish to improve this event to quicken my diligence, and draw my heart upward. I am cold and languid; and while such as he soar aloft, I creep like a snail. Still I would be following on, and wish I may do some good while I am continued here. Pray for me. May God assist and prosper you in all your labours. Present my respects to Mr. Hampton and Mr. Brabant when you see them.

I am your affectionate and faithful humble servant,

JOB ORTON.

LETTER LIII.

TO THE REV. MR. S. PALMER, HACKNEY, NEAR LONDON.

Birmingham, August 10, 1765.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I have been here for some weeks, on account of my health, and so did not receive your letter till lately. I heartily thank you for every part of it, except some marks made with red ink on the direction, which it was not quite so friendly to give the postmaster the trouble of making. If your letter had cost three times as much as it otherwise would have done, I should have cheerfully paid it, for the pleasure of hearing of your welfare, comfort, and encouragement in your ministry, which I have very much at heart.

I am glad to hear that you have abridged Mr. Baxter's Reformed Pastor, as we all need the admonitions it contains.† I really cannot judge of the propriety of printing an analysis to the chapters, in the manner you propose, for want of more distinctly remembering their contents, and how far a regular plan is carried on through the whole. I think such an analysis a great advantage to some other books, especially to Mr. Fawcett's abridgments.

It seems to me highly proper that in your abridgment of his work, every thing should be omitted that was suited only to the time in which it was published, or that, on other accounts, does not suit the circumstances of the present age; and that Mr.

* This is the only letter Mr. Orton ever wrote to me in long-hand.

† See Mr. Orton's recommendation of it in his Letters to a Young Clergyman, No. xix. It has been long out of print.

Baxter's stiffness of sentences and roughness of style should be amended.

My Life of Dr. Doddridge goes on slowly on account of my illness. I hope I shall sufficiently vindicate his character in every instance, especially that you mention, and show the unprejudiced world the dishonesty or folly of his accusers.* It may perhaps be published before Christmas next, if the Lord will.

I am glad to hear you are so comfortably settled, and heartily wish the success of your labours. I rejoice that you and so many other of my young brethren are increasing, while I am decreasing. May you continue long, and do more and better for Christ and souls than I have done. I should be very glad to see you again at Shrewsbury, if the Lord is pleased to continue my life. I am at present very infirm, and capable of little. Please to continue your prayers for me. Present my respectful compliments to Mr. Hunt,† your worthy fellow-labourer.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate and faithful servant,
JOB ORTON.

* My principal design in writing to Mr. Orton at this time was, to express my hope that in his intended Life of Dr. Doddridge, he would vindicate his character from a charge which, with great concern, I had often heard brought against that excellent man, which tended to excite a prejudice against him and his writings; viz. that of "duplicity and trimming, to please all parties." The grounds of this charge, and the able refutation of it, may be seen in Mr. Orton's life of the doctor, chap. viii. §. 7. As Dr. Kippis may be supposed less partial, and as his memoirs are in fewer hands, I will present the reader with an extract from what he wrote, relating to the same subject. "The charge I have mentioned against Dr. Doddridge with regard to his writings, has been extended to his preaching. By some of his enemies it was asserted that he was a trimmer in the pulpit. The fact, I am satisfied, was precisely as follows; when he preached in different places, he so far accommodated himself to the dispositions of the people as to avoid giving [unnecessary] offence. In neither case did he deliver any thing contrary to his sincere opinion. The persons most disposed to find fault with him, in respect to the point in question, were those who were entitled the 'rational dissenters.' They could not easily persuade themselves that a man of such abilities and general liberality of mind, could entertain very different opinions from their own, and they wished to have him rank more explicitly among them." See more on this subject in Kippis's Life of the doctor, prefixed to the Family Expositor, 8vo. edition, of which a few copies only were separately printed, p. 174—178. To the above justification, it may be added, that the doctor had many sermons which would be acceptable at *all* places.

† The Rev. William Hunt came from Newport-Pagnell (where he succeeded his father) to assist the Rev. John Barker at Hackney. Upon Mr. Barker's speedy and unexpected resignation (soon after which he was chosen at Salters' Hall), Mr. Hunt became sole pastor. After being laid aside some years by the infirmities of age, he died A. D. 1770. I was indebted to him for great candour and kindness. Dr. Doddridge maintained a strong friendship for him, which originated in a singular instance of benevolence in their youth, worth recording. Mr. Doddridge, while a student, called upon him at his father's when travelling in bad weather. Mr. Hunt offered to lend him a great coat. His mother, calling him aside, reproved him for putting such confidence in a stranger, as he then was. On which young Hunt replied, "I am sure he is a gentleman and a scholar." Young Doddridge overheard this, and never forgot it.

LETTER LIV.

Kidderminster, Feb. 2, 1771.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—I have Brown's piece,* which you desire, bound up with some other tracts on the Trinitarian controversy; and will send it, directed as you order. I could wish this piece was reprinted. By leaving out the appendix, if printed on a smaller letter, it might be sold for sixpence. It has given me much satisfaction. But some parts of it are rather too abstruse and metaphysical for common readers. Mr. Simon Brown, the author, was a man of an excellent spirit, and a clear head, but (as it often happens) being a moderate man, he was not well relished by either party. I remember, when I was at the academy, to have read a volume of his sermons; and by some extracts I made from them, they now appear to me to have been very good ones. But I have never seen them since, though I have examined every catalogue I have met with in order to find and purchase them. Before his death he unhappily sunk into a kind of distraction, which lessened the credit of his works, which otherwise would have been more esteemed, as they are really judicious and valuable.†

I heartily thank you for your Answer to Dr. Priestley [on the Lord's Supper], and hope it will be of singular service to prevent the spread of those loose, unscriptural, and in a great measure unprofitable, notions of that sacred ordinance, which he and too many others entertain. I think I never saw so much of the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord, in instituting such an ordinance, as since the notions of the Socinians have so much prevailed; for it seems as if it was one great end of that institution to prevent or confute them. And while it continues in

* It is entitled, A Sober and Charitable Disquisition on the Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c. This tract Mr. Orton had put into my hands, when at his house in 1761, and it afforded me so much satisfaction, that I wished to review it: but not being able to procure it in London, I requested the loan of it from him.

† Being possessed of the above volume of sermons, I can confirm Mr. Orton's opinion of them. I have also a number of his single sermons on various occasions, of which the same character may be given. Mr. Brown also published a volume of hymns, which are very devotional and evangelical. They passed through several editions. During the time that he laboured under the malady above mentioned, he published among other things, a very able Defence of Christianity against the Deists, of which he wrote a dedication, intended to be prefixed, to Queen Caroline, describing his situation, as having no soul. A copy of this curious piece may be seen in the Adventurer, No. 88. Mr. Anthony Atkey preached and printed his funeral sermon, in which he describes his case, and relates the cause of it. The substance of his account is, that upon the loss of his wife and of a son he became melancholy, and at length was possessed of the imagination that God had gradually annihilated his thinking substance, so that though he retained the human form and the power of speech, he had no more idea of what he said than a parrot. He continued thus ten years. See a letter from Mr. H. Baker to Dr. Doddridge, in Mr. Stedman's Collection, p. 416. A more particular account of Mr. Brown may be seen in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, vol. iv., where another cause of his malady is assigned by a correspondent, viz. his having been accessary to the death of a highway robber.

the church, it will be impossible to hinder the generality of Christians from having better notions of the atonement of Christ than some modern writers wish them to have, and from laying more stress upon it, both as the foundation of our Christian hope, and a powerful motive to every branch of a Christian temper and conversation.

I am much obliged by your kind regard to my late publication,* and hope you will join with me in thankfulness to God, who hath honoured it with acceptance and usefulness in the world; which is a great comfort to me amidst my present weaknesses. I may probably, this summer, trouble the world with another publication of the same kind, but I am afraid of exceeding.

I am willing to do my younger brethren any service, and they shall be welcome to peruse any of my sermons, though I am fearful of being charged with vanity in complying with such a request. If you will inform me on what particular subjects you choose to read any, I will send you a few; only you will recollect I have none which are properly controversial.

I think you need no hints of advice from me, about the conducting your great work. I have said every thing I can say upon that subject, in Dr. Doddridge's Life. Only I wish you to keep to the good old custom of expounding and catechizing, for which one of your predecessors, at least, Mr. Henry, was so eminent. When I mention "expounding" (as you speak of the difficulty of making two sermons a week) you may think this is putting more work upon you; but I mean that you should substitute an exposition of a chapter in the morning, instead of a sermon. I know not whether this would be, upon the whole, easier to you at first; but it would be of great advantage to yourself, by increasing your acquaintance with your bible; and it will be growing easier by use. You may also probably find it more agreeable to your people than a sermon. Many ministers have done this, and always found it so. Mr. Clark did it at Birmingham with great acceptance. It is the way to bring your hearers to a better acquaintance with the scriptures; to gain a more comprehensive idea of religion, and the divine dispensations. And in drawing practical reflections, your subject will naturally lead you to say things which may be suited to the case of some of your people in particular, which you could not introduce into a sermon, without seeming to do it on purpose for [individuals], and so giving them offence. This I often found, and look upon this circumstance as a considerable argument in favour of the practice.

I shall be obliged to you to make inquiry of the character of Mr. E——, a young man who was some time at the Mile-End Academy and at Glasgow. He is disposed to conform, and a cler-

* Sermons on Religious Exercises.

gyman, a friend of mine, is about to employ him as a curate. He lived some time with J. S——, Esq. at * *. It is probable that you may hear something of him from the present tutors of that academy, which I think is now removed near you. The clergyman is a serious evangelical preacher, and would be glad to have a curate in the same strain of preaching.

I lament the death of the worthy men you mention. I have had letters from Mr. Rickards,* who was a very generous friend to the ministers in North Wales. I could wish to procure the most necessitous of them a share in his charitable legacy.

I have no prospect of ever coming into your parts. I have not been four miles from this place for near three years, and am quite incapable of travelling; and, indeed, almost useless here. Yet, I bless God, my spirits are in general pretty free and cheerful. I wish for a few more sensible agreeable companions. Most of our dissenters are narrow and bigoted; live too much upon forms and phrases, and it is not easy to be upon friendly terms with them unless you can go all their lengths. In this respect I think they are worse than they were when I first knew the place, almost thirty years ago.

I beg the favour of you to present my best respects to any of my brethren who know me, particularly Mr. Tayler. May God prosper your labours. I am, &c.

LETTER LV.

Feb. 20, 1771.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—A tradesman of this town is setting out for London, and by him I hope to send you the book you desire to see. I wish it were reprinted. I am sorry you are likely to lose by your publication;† but this is the case with most authors who write upon a controversial subject; and, indeed, with most who publish on any subject, except they understand author-craft better than I do. I shall lose considerably on the whole by Dr. Doddridge's Life, i. e. lose more by the second edition than I gained by the first. But if we can do any good to our fellow-creatures, we shall not finally be losers.

I have not read Dr. Priestley's Answer to your letters. He is no favourite writer with me. By what I have heard from some of my brethren it requires no reply; and all that can be expected from you is (if another edition of your piece should be wanted) to speak handsomely of a concession or two which he has made. Perhaps you may judge proper, some time hence,

* Who had a house at Newington-Green. My friend, Benjamin Boddington, Esq., married his daughter.

† The Protestant Dissenter's Answer to Dr. Priestley's Free Address on the Lord's Supper. The edition was too large, and the price too small,—1s. 6d.

to throw your letters to him into another form, as a treatise, obviating his main objections against the common and scriptural idea of the Lord's Supper, keeping his name and book out of sight.

I am sorry you have so many difficulties in the way of catechizing, and fear there is no overcoming them.* The state of your congregation is also very unfavourable to expounding in the manner I proposed. But as you have different congregations in the morning and afternoon, suppose you were to have generally a different subject for each, and let your morning sermon be principally from the historical part of scripture; as the history of Adam, Noah, Abraham, &c., the parables and miracles of Christ. This would, in some measure, answer the end I propose. I fear you will think it too much both to expound and preach in a morning.† But as I presume you read a chapter or two in the morning service, suppose you were to confine yourself to one chapter, study it a little before, and read it over with a kind of short paraphrase on all the difficult passages; something in the manner of Whitby, and then draw a few practical reflections upon it. This was my way of expounding for many years, and I was seldom above twenty or twenty-five minutes in this part of the service. I think this is a very useful method, and you will not find it very difficult, especially if you write down some hints of the reflections you intend to dwell upon. I urged my people to bring their bibles with them to meeting, that they might look over the chapter as I went on, and thus better understand what I was about.

I am very sensible of the difficulties which the ministers in and about London have, on account of the uncertain state and fluctuations of their congregations. It is a great bar to their usefulness. Their hearers are not likely to be judicious Christians, hearing so many different preachers, and never having any regular plan of truth and duty laid before them, as they would have by attending regularly on one minister.‡

You wonder [from what he had before said] at my settling at Kidderminster. I as much wonder at it myself. But the case was, when the unhappy differences at Shrewsbury made it absolutely necessary for me to remove, and that at the beginning of winter, my scheme was to have gone to Birmingham, where my nearest relations and some valuable friends reside. But I could get neither a house nor a convenient lodging in the town. I had the offer of a good apartment in the house of a

* I did it several years before a Sunday school was set up, but none sent their children except the poor, to whom I gave the catechisms gratis.

† This I did for a considerable time, but contrary to my present judgment.

‡ That is—provided he consulted the profit rather than the entertainment of his people. The justice and importance of the above observation I have seen and felt in such a degree, that a country situation has always appeared to me preferable, as some following letters will show; but my inclination has always been over-ruled.

worthy family here, and being under the care of an excellent and most friendly physician [Dr. Johnstone], this I accepted for the winter, during which Providence pointed out to me a convenient house, which I purchased, and am, upon the whole, as comfortable as I can expect to be any where. There are the finest rides about this town of any place I ever saw; dry sandy commons and fine prospects.

I should have liked the neighbourhood of London, but I had two reasons against it. One was the want of friends and acquaintance. The other and the chief was, that my circumstances would not admit of that. I live comparatively cheap here. My house, including taxes, is not above eighteen pounds a year. I keep my horse for eleven. I have some valuable friends here, though they are not all very judicious. We have a book society, and I have frequent opportunity of seeing my brethren in the neighbourhood, though I have not been able to go three miles from home for three years. You will excuse these particulars, as you so kindly enter into what concerns me. I might add another reason why I should have declined a settlement in or near London. I have heard it called "the land of forgetfulness," and, indeed, have found it so. Some, who seemed good friends in the country, have not continued such when they have for some time breathed the air of the great city and its environs. It is hard to get a letter from them, or any business done by them, though it requires no expense of time or labour. I was afraid of catching this infection, as punctuality in correspondence, and acts of service, have always appeared to me necessary ingredients of friendship and justice, and indeed of religion.

I fear the people, late under the care of our friend * *, will make a very bad choice, and take up with a minister of Mr. ——'s principles and inclinations. Some of them want "a clever man," as they express it, that is, in my view of the case, one that will amuse and entertain them in and out of the pulpit, and be one in their parties of pleasure. So low is both religion and good sense sunk amongst us, and so little good did Mr. C——'s most judicious and serious labours do to many of that congregation. May God bless your labours, and make you prosperous and happy in every connexion and relation!

I am, &c.

LETTER LVI.

[EXTRACT.]

August 19, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad to hear what design you have in hand, which I have long wished to see executed.* But why all your compliments, apologies, &c.? This is not quite so friendly and brotherly: but you are got to the polite part of the world, and so must be excused if you contract a little of their language. I hope it will never be with the loss of your sincerity, which is too often the case with them. I never had any intention of republishing Mr. Bourn's Dissenter's Catechism. I have just finished a new edition of the Summary of Doctrinal and Practical Religion, but this no way interferes with your plan, which I doubt not will be acceptable and useful. As to your manuscript, you have better heads near you to revise it, especially Dr. Furneaux.† But if you should choose to send it to me, I will give you my thoughts upon it with all freedom.

I am, &c.

LETTER LVII.

Feb. 24, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—I have read your manuscript [of the Catechism], and examined it with all the attention and care I can. I have written my remarks on a distinct paper, referring to your pages, and I have added at the end some further hints on the subject. You will consider them as only hints, submitted to your consideration. My authority I hope will not, I am sure it *ought* not, of itself, to have any weight with you. I think you should, by all means, consider every material objection made against the dissenters, especially the more common and popular ones.

You must judge for yourself whether it is advisable to have a recommendation from any of your brethren. I imagine it will signify little. I do not recollect any thing of that kind of late. The last piece I remember to have seen with a recommendation was a small tract of one David Rees, concerning the Main-

* That of publishing the Protestant Dissenter's Catechism, to which I was urged by several ministers, with a view to give the rising generation a just view of the grounds of our dissent. Their object was, to have a supplement to the Assembly's Catechism; but as this run out to a greater length than was proper to be committed to memory, they engaged me to undertake another, entitled the Dissenter's Shorter Catechism, in the manner of the Assembly's, with scripture proofs.

† Dr. Furneaux did accordingly revise it, and Dr. Kippis, unsolicited, drew up the account of it in the Monthly Review.

tenance of the Ministry, which was recommended by *almost all the dissenting ministers in London, of every denomination.* And perhaps it was the *only* subject on which they were all agreed. They all thought his doctrine quite orthodox; and a great deal of mirth it occasioned when the piece was published. But this ample recommendation was of so little avail, that I believe few dissenting ministers now living, between twenty and fifty years of age, ever saw or heard of it.

I received your Consecration Sermon,* and thank you for it. I am much pleased with it. It contains many important hints which our dissenters should attend to. In the beginning of the second sermon you quote a passage about "golden priests and wooden chalices," as St. Augustine's. I am not sufficiently read in the fathers to determine whether it was *his* saying or not, but I find a favourite author of mine, and one that knows them thoroughly (I mean Jortin) quoting it, and at the bottom of the page says, "Bonifacius, Decret. Pt. 3, de Consecrat. Distr. 1, Can. 44." This indeed is a very trifling matter, but where one is not certain, it is best only to say, "One of the fathers."

I am glad my Discourses to the Aged were agreeable to you. I wish they may do good. I have not health and strength to undertake any *new* compositions, especially for the public. What Mr. Addington proposes† is very much wanted; but there is nothing that requires greater ability, skill, and delicacy. It must be one of a thousand that is fit for such a work. I have very little acquaintance with the state of dissenting ministers and people any where, except in a small circle about me. I am almost a perfect stranger to London, having never been there. I hope some one that knows the exact state of things amongst us, especially in the metropolis, will undertake such a work.

Mr. Flechere [of Madeley] is a very sensible, worthy, pious man, though sometimes a little eccentric. I am much pleased both with his first and second piece [Checks to Antinomianism], though he is quite too diffuse and figurative. His cautions are much wanted, not only among the methodists, but the dissenters, and I believe in few places more than here; for our notions of morality, and the obligation of gospel precepts, are very loose, amidst all our zeal for orthodoxy. Flechere's books have sold prodigiously, being recommended, both in and out of the pulpit, by all Wesley's preachers; and he is so much esteemed by the high Calvinistical methodists, that many of them will read them, and I hope will get good by them. Mr. Hill's Answer is weak,

* The Superior Glory of the Second Temple; the substance of two sermons, at the opening of a new meeting-house in Hackney, Oct. 13, 1771.

† What was proposed to Mr. Orton was, to point out some of the chief improprieties in the manner of conducting and attending public worship among dissenters (especially in and about London), and some things in the management of their affairs, as a body, by which their interest suffers; and to recommend a reform. Most persons who knew Mr. Orton will be of opinion that no one was better qualified for such a work than himself.

childish, and fawning. He now speaks out, and shows himself to be, what I always thought him, a rank antinomian, and thorough in the worst sentiments of Dr. Crisp. I have no doubt but the controversy will do good; and I hope will open the eyes of some of our dissenters, who admire every thing that has the appearance of piety and zeal; and think every sentiment espoused and defended by those ministers that appear serious and vehement, must be right and scriptural. But when persons talk childishly, argue weakly, and act wickedly or dishonourably, I can never think the Spirit of God is their guide and helper.

I have been principally employed, this winter in reading Baxter's Life, Calamy's Abridgment of it and Continuation, with some other tracts about the ejected ministers. These books always give me pleasure, though at the same time they shame and humble me. It is very much to be wished that some person would republish Calamy's Account, incorporating his Continuation with it, and leaving out every thing that is now become uninteresting, &c. I think this would be a valuable work, exceedingly entertaining and useful. Nothing can be more striking and awakening than the lives of such men. I much long to have it done; and I think there would be no great difficulty in it.*

I heartily wish you growing comfort in all your attempts to do good, and beg your prayers for a poor ejected silenced minister; for I think I may fairly number myself in that honourable class.

I am, &c.

P. S. You will please to present my respectful compliments to Mr. Noah Hill. I am glad to hear he is so acceptable, and wish it may continue. But London is the centre of fashion, the land of changeableness, and I may add, of forgetfulness too.

In another letter, written near this time, he says—Wet weather has confined me much. The long evenings are very dull, as I have seldom any company, and some days I have scarcely seen the human face divine, except my own family. But I have had much entertainment, and I hope found some improvement, in conversing so much with our suffering forefathers. It would be sad indeed if I could not bear moderate pain and ill health, when I want for nothing, while they suffered such grievous things for truth and conscience' sake, and some of them in the want of all things.

* Few readers need to be informed that this work was afterwards attempted (under the title of the Nonconformist's Memorial) by the editor of these letters, with Mr. Orton's encouragement and further direction. But it proved more difficult than he apprehended. See the preface.

LETTER LVIII.

April 26, 1773.

Dear Sir,—I was favoured with your letter and the parcel by your wife's brother, who is a very amiable youth indeed; and though I had but little of his company, I cannot but entertain a very favourable opinion of his good sense, genteel behaviour, and real piety.* I am glad the book and the manuscripts were agreeable to you. I heartily wish with you, that Brown's tract was reprinted. I can see no reason against your undertaking it. Your objection, from Waterland's Answer to it, is of weight, but I think not sufficient. I have seen his Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, yet I much question whether I ever read it through; it being a maxim with me, when I begin to read a polemic writer, if he is not precise, distinct, and clear in his definitions, and I cannot readily understand the terms which he uses, relating to the subject, to lay him down; for it is impossible to have clear reasoning and judicious arguments from a writer who either will not tell you his meaning, or expresses it in such a manner that you cannot understand it.

I could never yet learn what Dr. Waterland meant by the word "person." He has several definitions of that word, but I cannot understand some of them, nor reconcile those which I think I do understand with others that he uses in different parts of his work. He always fails me when he comes to the main hinge of the controversy. Had he possessed the clear head, and used the clear method, of my good friend Dr. Scott,† he might be easily understood, but then he would not have been orthodox. His resentment against those whom he calls "Arians," and the censures he passes upon them for their clerical subscription, have all been retorted upon himself, as he was certainly an Arminian; and he never could remove them, though he tried all the arts of a Jesuit to do it. He was a very high churchman, and wrote very severely against the Calvinists as well as the Arians, and therefore you will seldom see him quoted by any of the Athanasian dissenters.

As to your Catechism, what influence that, or any such publication, might have upon any "future application to parliament," your brethren in London, especially those who are of the committee, are better judges than I can be; but if the publication

* Mr. William Walker, the youngest of three sons: who in consequence of sitting in a wet counting-house caught a cold which issued in a consumption. He went into Worcestershire for change of air, and returned apparently better; but not being radically recovered, died suddenly, when he was on the point of marriage to an amiable young lady, at the age of twenty-one. He justly deserved the above encomium. The cause of his death is inserted as a caution to young men.

† Dr. Daniel Scott, who published an Essay towards a Demonstration of the Scripture Trinity, 1725. A new edition of it (compressed) was printed by Goadby (no date), with memoirs of the author prefixed, supposed to be Mr. Orton's.

depends in any degree upon my vote, I cheerfully give it with both my hands, and heartily wish it success.

I hear nothing of what is doing at Salters' Hall, but Mr. Spilsbury intends being here next week, and I shall probably hear something from him; though he is ignorant of church affairs and publications in London, to a degree which has often astonished me; yet he is as free and communicative in other respects as I could wish.

This is neither the first nor the second instance in which my friend Sowden's behaviour, relating to a settlement in England, hath surprised me.* He has lived so long under an establishment, that he seems to have imbibed the very spirit of it, and is hardly fit to be a dissenting minister, to depend upon the justice and good will of a congregation for his support. I cannot but think that Mr. * * would have done well at Salters' Hall, as his strain of preaching is judicious, serious, and evangelical, and his manner popular.†

I ought to have a respect for that congregation, as they once favoured me with an invitation. They were astonished, and some of them angry, that a young minister, then unsettled as a preacher should peremptorily and at once refuse their offer. But I was never cut out for London, either by abilities, temper, or bodily strength. I rather pity than envy some worthy ministers of my acquaintance, who are settled there, and who have not a tenth part of that esteem and respect which they deserve.

I am much pleased and obliged by the manner in which you take notice of the "diploma." I have no right to any such distinction, nor would it by any means have become me in my better days; much less now I am quite broken down, thrown into a corner, and on the verge of the grave. It is wrong much to desire those titles that are really due and deserved; but wrong indeed to affect such as are false, and far above a person's merit. Dr. Gibbons, who sent me the diploma, and another doctor in the country, wondered at my declining the title. But I did not wonder at their being surprised at it. I have told them, and I have told the college, in the most respectful manner I could, that I could not satisfy my conscience to use or receive a title, by which I might be distinguished from my brethren in the ministry; as upon the most impartial inquiry, I thought Jesus Christ had expressly, or at least in effect, forbidden it. Erasmus, I remember, says, "that he was obliged

* Mr. Benjamin Sowden was a native of Worcester, and a pupil of Dr. Doddridge. He was some time settled at Stow-Market, and afterwards became minister of the English church at Rotterdam, supported by the states of Holland. He discovered an inclination to fix in London, where he was very popular, and was in treaty with the congregation at Carter Lane and Salters' Hall, but could not agree upon terms. Mr. Sowden had a son in London, who conformed, and became minister of the English episcopal church at Amsterdam.

† The vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Mr. Hugh Farmer was filled by the choice of Mr. Hugh Worthington, who has kept up a good congregation ever since.

to take his doctor's degree, though it went against his conscience; etiam vetante doctorum principe." But I thank God I am under no such obligation. And as I cannot preach, or perform any ministerial services, I should be glad if my friends would drop the title of "Reverend," for I have no faith in an indelible character. I understand a divine in London, of the name of Fisher,* had a diploma sent with mine, from the same learned body. Of him I know nothing at all, but I imagine he is a tutor at your Hackney Academy. If so, as a tutor, he has a better right to a title than a common divine.

I observe that you think, in some of my remarks on your Catechism, I am too much of a Presbyterian for you. I always thought myself quite an Independent. I entirely agree with Turner in his excellent treatise on Social Religion, on the nature of Christian churches. But I suppose Independency in London is different from what it is in the country. And it is probable a person who endeavours to form his judgment upon this point, and perhaps on any other, purely from the New Testament, may entirely agree with no denomination whatever.

I heartily rejoice with you in all the comfort you have in your family and congregation, and pray God it may abound more and more. I should have been glad to have seen you if you had come with your brother, and shall be to see you at any time. You are sure to find me upon the spot, and always at leisure to receive a friend. Though I have irrecoverably lost my health and strength and spirits, yet I bless God, I have a soul capable of loving, and a few, though very few friends worthy of being beloved; so that I have not lost every thing. But I still want the main thing: greater love to God and the Redeemer, a more humble cordial submission to the divine will, and "a good hope through grace" as to a future state. My respects to any of my brethren with whom I am acquainted, though most of my most intimate friends among them are become quite *insolvent*, amidst the many bankruptcies which prevail in your great city.

I am, dear Sir,

With much esteem,

Yours, &c.

I am selecting and reviewing a few miscellaneous sermons as my strength will permit, which may perhaps be printed by myself or executors. I am now putting to the press a second edition of the Sermons to the Aged. If you have observed any thing which may be altered to advantage, I shall be obliged to you to inform me soon.

* Dr. Daniel Fisher, many years minister at Warminster, became resident tutor at Homerton in 1769. A few years ago he resigned the office, but continues in Hackney. I have long been indebted to him for his kindness as a friend, and his candour as a hearer, he having no pastoral charge.

LETTER LIX.

December 3, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—Before your letter came to hand I had given your Catechism [then printed] a third and careful review. I do not observe any thing in it that can be omitted, so as to make it considerably shorter without injury to the work itself. As books now sell, it is cheap for a shilling, and few will scruple that price. A subscription to print a larger and cheaper edition might answer to give them away; but this is a method I should not choose, if the work were mine, unless my friends would do it without my solicitation or even concurrence. For otherwise you will lie under obligations to them; and before you have lived in the world as long as I have, you will find, if you have not already found, obligations are a burden, and a very disagreeable one too. A wise man will choose to have as few as possible, except he meet with one of those very few friends to whom it is rather a pleasure to be obliged.

The observations I have made on the Catechism are very few. I cannot give my consent to omit the excellent preface, though it might be printed in a smaller letter. [On the head of Responses] examine if you can a book called Liturgia Tigurina, which I have not. I see nothing else but what is proper and right, so far as I am a judge. Indeed I am but a poor one, and therefore you will pay no more attention to my sentiments than you think they deserve.

I wish I could give you any assistance relating to Calamy.* The passage I mentioned to you from Mr. Locke [for a motto] is in his "pieces," p. 62. You will find it in Mr. Bourn's catechism, in the historical part. I sent it to him, with some other things which he inserted in his notes.

As to "an account of the principal dissenting ministers since the ejectment," I think you will do very well to carry that scheme in your mind, and be making preparation for it, from lives, funeral sermons, and Neal's History. But this must be a work of time. To this you may prefix an abridgment of the latter part of Calamy's Historical Account of the Troubles the Dissenters have met with since the Act of Uniformity. Though I can do very little, be assured I will keep your scheme in mind, and give you any assistance in my power. I heartily wish you health and spirits to go through with it, as it will be a most useful work.†

I beg you will present my respectful compliments to Mr. Wilton, and the rest of the members of your brotherly associa-

* Meaning the new edition of his Account of ejected ministers.

† This design I have long since abandoned, but heartily wish some one of my brethren, who has more leisure, and is less advanced in years, would undertake the work.

tion, whose acquaintance and company I am ready to envy you. It is more likely to be agreeable, and to answer valuable ends, than if it was larger. Your design will probably be censured; but you will have too much sense and consciousness of worthy and upright views to mind that.

Mr. Coles's Opposition Opposed is an excellent piece. I am much pleased with the good sense, candour, and spirit, with which that honest man writes. I love defences of liberty and toleration coming from that quarter.*

I hope that in a fortnight's time Buckland will present you with my little tract on Christian Zeal. If you approve it, you will I know endeavour to further the sale. Those of my brethren who read it in manuscript advised me to print it, and their remarks upon it have made it better than it would otherwise have been. I fear it will lay me open to censure from some of the clergy, and some of the laity. But persons that are asleep seldom love to be wakened, and are often angry with the most friendly hand that attempts it.

I wish to recommend to your notice and that of your brethren an honest worthy Welsh minister, who is gone to London to get money for a meeting-house. He is a truly laborious and zealous man, and greatly deserves encouragement.†

Believe me to be, with every good wish for your own, your family's and church's prosperity,

Yours, &c.

LETTER LX.

June 27, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I have no difficulty in reading your letters, though you use some characters different from your tutor's. I love to hear from you, because you write freely and without art, as if you were talking to me. In that strain all letters ought to be. I can consequently write to you again without restraint, and have no labour in studying words and phrases, and the turns of periods, which I am obliged to with some correspondents.

I have heard from Mr. —— and wrote an answer concerning Mr. ——.‡ I wish this young divine may behave to his satisfaction, and that of the parish. He has many excellent qualities, and is a most acceptable and useful preacher.

* A small pamphlet, which I sent him written in defence of the application to parliament, against some zealous but ignorant persons who had opposed it. The author is a minister in Bedfordshire, who had no academical education.

† He then deserved that character, but unhappily lost it, by a bad habit which he contracted, by going all over the country on this begging business. His name shall not be mentioned, but the fact is recorded as a warning to others.

‡ A young clergyman, whom Mr. Orton had recommended, concerning whom he had corresponded with the editor, who was acquainted with the patron of the living.

I leave it to the consciences of these worthy clergymen to subscribe or not as they please. I do not think it my duty to dissuade them, or give my opinion, except they ask it. Archdeacon Blackburn, in his Four Charges to his clergy, lately published (which he was so kind as to send me), has urged the most plausible reasons I have met with, why such men should continue in, and submit to the directions of the church. They do not satisfy my conscience; but they will easily satisfy those who are desirous to have the burden sit light upon them.

I am very sensible of the great labour it hath cost you to bring Calamy into such good order. It gives me pleasure to find so many candid men in the establishment pleased with your work. It will do good among them, whether they continue in the church or not, and will dispose them to judge favourably of their dissenting brethren. As to your publishing a third volume, you must judge for yourself. I know many writers who overdo. Perhaps I myself may soon be charged with that, if I am not already. But I cannot preach; else I would not publish sermons. I know not what to do with my Sermon on the Ejected Ministers; whether I shall print it in a volume, or by itself.* I have many purchasers and readers among the serious and moderate clergy, and I would not offend them, or insert any thing in a volume of sermons which would discourage them from recommending it to their friends and parishioners; and as a single sermon it would soon be lost and forgotten.

I wondered very much, when I was a child, that no more notice was taken of Bartholomew-day by the dissenters, as I had heard so much of it from my grandfather, and other pious relations and aged Christians. Oldbury lecture, in this neighbourhood, used to be preached in the week in which August 24 fell, and was instituted on purpose to commemorate these eminent men. I once preached there, and considered their case. But on account of the harvest, it was put off to the middle of September, which I think was wrong [as the object of the lecture was in time forgotten]. I persuaded some ministers, whom I could be free with, when they preached this lecture, to keep in view the intention of it, and they did so, much to the pleasure and edification of the hearers.

I very much like your scheme for a "Bartholomew-society,† and country lectures." I attempted [to establish such lectures] when at Shrewsbury, and preached two or three times at several places in a year, which was the means of doing good, and in-

* It was afterwards printed by itself, in a small size, at the desire of some friends.

† It was proposed to form a society for the encouragement of ministers to carry on lectures in country villages, and to have an annual sermon in London, on Bartholomew day, to recommend it; but though the former part of the plan was adopted on a small scale, the latter was never brought to bear. I have, however, for many years, at Bartholomew-tide, given my own hearers a discourse to recall to their remembrance the principles and sufferings of our forefathers; and I take this opportunity of recommending the same practice to my brethren.

creasing our interest. But I could not get my brethren long to concur. The methodists getting into the places where our lectures were kept, and propagating their antinomian notions, were a great hindrance to them, and discouraged many from attending them. The Baptists also did us much injury. Where any good work was begun, or serious impressions wrought, then they thrust themselves in and did mischief.

I wish ministers would lecture on your Dissenter's Catechism. I have nothing to say about politics. I am one of the quiet of the land. With regard to the application to parliament you shall do as you please.* I never reckoned such as adopt your ideas among the "wrong-heads." If I used that phrase, in my letter to Mr. ——, I referred to those whom Dr. Wilton hath so admirably exposed.† I know but three ministers in all these parts of the kingdom who refuse their concurrence. One is Mr. Hawkes, of Birmingham, who never said more than this, "I must beg to be excused." I know he goes upon your principle.

I can say nothing about Dr. Ashworth and the academy but what grieves and hurts me exceedingly. Dr. Stonhouse tells me he cannot live many weeks. I have written to him, and mentioned Mr. Robins as being, in the opinion of all that I converse with, the most proper person to succeed him. I have had much concern and anxiety upon the subject, but I blame myself for it. I had as much when Dr. Doddridge died. But Providence interposed, and so it will again.

I am much pleased, and heartily thank you, that you do not absolutely decline what I proposed to you about Clark's Bible. I would fain have it begun, or resolved upon, before I go hence and be no more seen. I send you the following as a specimen of my Reflections: Jer. xiv. While you are engaged about this work, you will be greatly improving yourself in the knowledge of scripture, and increasing your qualification for expounding and preaching. I thought I found so much advantage in preparing Doddridge's Expositor, on the epistles, for the press, that it abundantly repaid the labour.

Believe me to be yours, &c.

LETTER LXI.

July 12, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I must write as little at a time as I can, therefore you must excuse repetitions, &c. I have looked over your numbers and send you a few remarks; none of them of any

* I at that time concurred with a few others, in objecting to any test imposed by the magistrate as a condition to preach the gospel. I have since viewed the matter differently, according to Mr. Orton's statement of it, in the 590th page of this volume.

† In his Apology for the Application, &c., in answer to the protest of thirteen members of the body of ministers, grounded chiefly on doctrinal sentiment.

great consequence, but they may be of some use if a second edition be wanted.

I wish your engraver had put Mr. Tallents's age and motto* on the plate. I think he has made the print sourer than the picture; yet neither are sourer than his face, though a good-tempered man.

Our accounts of Dr. Ashworth grow daily worse and worse. I dare not out of pity write to him, as he answered my last in such writing as I could not read. I would not add a grain to the weight of his affliction. I cannot lighten it but by sincere prayer for him. What will be done for a successor I know not. Mr. * * has had it hinted to him, by some of his friends and brethren, that he is the man. But he strongly protests against it. Some persons mention [one and some another.] But it is not my business to give my opinion till it is asked. And why should we concern ourselves about *tutors*, when, with regard to many of our congregations, an ignorant, confident, censorious lay-preacher will be more acceptable to them than the most learned, pious, zealous minister in all your noble catalogue. This evening, for instance, a drum-major of the Northamptonshire militia is to preach in Mr. Fawcett's pulpit, while Mr. ——, a learned worthy minister from * *, shall not be allowed to get into it.† But "great is Diana of the Ephesians." I lament this folly and bigotry, and party zeal, but cannot mend things. Half the congregation here know no more of the principles of dissenters than their church-going neighbours; and were a methodist vicar or curate to be settled in the parish church, they would leave the meeting at once. This our pastor knows and acknowledges; and therefore he encourages this sort of preachers occasionally, that his flock may not stray, though many of these wavering people are no credit to any society. I wish your Catechism and History, which are in so many hands here, may do them good in this respect. But zeal for some tenets and phrases is the governing principle; I fear I may add as to many, the whole of their religion. I am, &c.

*** In the next letter which I received from Mr. Orton, dated July 31, 1775, which was soon after Dr. Ashworth's death, he mentions the interest he took in consequence of that lamented event, in the following words:—This Daventry affair has sunk me considerably. I am almost demolished with

* If I remember right the motto was *Umbra umbræ*.

† And yet Mr. Fawcett himself was so liberal, in admitting preachers of various sentiments into his pulpit, as to incur censure on this ground.

‡ There is no reason to question the justice of the above account, as understood of considerable numbers; and the same is applicable to many in most of the larger congregations of all denominations. But it must here be observed, as an undoubted fact, which Mr. Orton would have readily acknowledged, that there was as much real practical religion at Kidderminster as in most places in the kingdom.

writing letters, yet I could not avoid it. Persons put me upon doing what they would do much better themselves. But it is to serve the Lord Christ and the interest of religion, and one cannot wear one's self out in a better cause.

LETTER LXII.

[EXTRACT.]

August 31, 1775.

You have heard by this time that Mr. Robins has accepted the invitation to Daventry. I had a great deal of trouble in writing to him, and engaging all my friends and correspondents to apply to him, who all concurred in thinking him a most proper person. I do not know a single objection, and I cannot hear of any one else that makes one. The divines and the laity, of all principles and persuasions in these parts, are agreed in their opinion of him, and every body is well pleased that he has accepted the office. I look back with pleasure and thankfulness on the pains I have taken in this affair, and firmly believe I shall never have reason to repent it.

The young men from these parts are now returning [to Daventry], and I have just parted with my nephew, who is going thither; but I fear he will not incline to the ministry. I must be content and thankful (as I hope I truly am) that God hath honoured me, "putting me into the ministry," though so unworthy of the office, even though he do not see good that any related to me should choose it. However I have sent, with my nephew, a lovely young man from this town, whom I have had a little under my care for a year past, and whom I shall endeavour to patronize and encourage. He is a good classical scholar, and reads my sermons [in short-hand] very readily; a youth of great solidity and prudence, and great application; so that if God is pleased to spare him, I hope and believe he will make a very useful man.*

LETTER LXIII.

September 6, 1775.

Dear Sir,—As your work is drawing near a conclusion, I must trouble you with another letter. I am much pleased with your inserting that remarkable story concerning Mr. Peter

* It is supposed that this was Mr. Nichols, who was settled some time at Birmingham, but died young of a consumption. He was nephew to the Rev. Mr. Carpenter.

Ince.* It is astonishing how Mr. Bates [of Warminster, who related it] came to destroy his papers, as he had taken great pains to collect them, and was thought to understand the history of nonconformity as well as any minister among us.

I should be glad to see the Lives of the Puritans. But it is difficult to get a good account of them. And, indeed, it is hard to say, whom you will reckon under that title.† Some kept in the church to the last, though they held the main principles of the Puritans. Indeed, the most eminent of them for learning, piety, and usefulness, did not separate from it. I particularly refer to Perkins, Bolton, and Ward, of Ipswich, who were the three best writers for sense, judgment, style, and language, in their day. Both parties claimed these excellent men, but they certainly kept in the church so long as they lived. This you will think of.

Were I to publish an account of ejected and silenced ministers, I should be strongly tempted to insert Mr. Lindsey in the list (which he mentions with so much veneration),‡ if I brought him in by head and shoulders. He certainly deserves as much respect and honour as any one of them, for the part he has acted. Perhaps few of them exceeded him in learning or piety. I venerate him as I would any of your confessors. As to his particular sentiments, they are nothing to me, any more than Baxter's, or Tombes's, or John Goodwin's, &c. An honest, pious man, who makes such a sacrifice to truth and conscience as he has done, is a glorious character, and deserves the respect, esteem, and veneration, of every true Christian, whatever his particular sentiments may be. And this I maintain, let your neighbour (who ought to be excommunicated) say what he pleases.§ Let him read and meditate upon Neh. ii. 10, and blush if he can.

I think it will be very wrong to let such a worthy and useful man as Dr. Ashworth leave our world without some public notice taken of his death, for the instruction of others and for the credit of our interest. I have written to Mr. Robins, and said every thing I could to engage him to print his sermon. If he declines it, I think you are the proper person to do it. I can see no objection against printing your sermon, and printing it as a funeral sermon for Dr. Ashworth.‖ There are instances

* See Dunhead, Wiltshire. The story was lately told of Mr. Heywood, in the Methodist Magazine; an evident mistake, which I have in vain desired to be corrected. Many articles from that book are there inserted without any reference to it.

† I meant to include all who espoused the principles of religious liberty from the Reformation, especially those mentioned by Neal.

‡ Page 208 of his Apology, 2nd edit.

§ To whom and to what this refers I have happily forgotten.

‖ From an affectionate esteem for my worthy tutor I preached a sermon to my own congregation, in which he was well known, on occasion of his death, as he had done to his, on the death of Dr. Watts. On hearing, with great concern, that Mr. Robins

in which the person appointed by a minister to preach his funeral sermon declined printing it, when another minister has published one. So Dr. Allen did for Dr. Hughes, when Dr. Laurence refused printing his. But you submit too much to my judgment. Pray follow your own, or advise with some of your brethren who are better judges than I can be. The general design and strain of the sermon I much approve. My principal difficulty in forming a judgment of it, is from the manner in which it is written; the additions, alterations, and amendments. I would have a little more said of the doctor than you have said; particularly of the indefatigable pains he took to increase his qualifications for the office of a tutor, and the many excellent ministers whom he trained up.

I wish, for the sake of your hearers and readers, you would labour to shorten your sentences. I have ventured to do it in one page, and it might be done with great advantage in many other places. I have made a few remarks and queries upon the sermon, which I submit entirely to your judgment.

I have just printed three sermons, containing Directions for profitably Hearing the Word, Joining in public Prayer and Psalmody, to be sold for nine-pence. Some people will not like some things in them; but I think there is no congregation but needs, and might be profited by, the advices they contain.

I rejoice in your health and strength, and the faithfulness and zeal with which you employ them in your Master's work. May it abundantly prosper in your hands! I am very weak and languid. This letter has been the work of almost a whole day. But if it furthers your good designs I shall not think it, and I hope our common Master will not judge it, mispent. I am, with sincere esteem and best wishes,

Your affectionate, &c.

*** A postscript to this letter contains a most wise and benevolent plan, which would charm every generous mind, if it could be published consistently with delicacy to the feelings of the principal object yet living.

"To fill up my paper," says Mr. Orton, "I will mention to you another affair, which lies with some weight upon my mind." This was a design which Dr. Doddridge had communicated to him in a letter, of printing an abridgment of his Family Expositor in a cheap form. He adds, "Pray keep this in your thoughts. Perhaps I may send you the letter when I can find it, and you may make use of it when I am dead. I very much wish this design was executed. I think it would be very acceptable and useful."

refused to publish his discourse at Daventry, on this interesting occasion, I felt as Mr. Orton did, and therefore sent him a copy of my own for his opinion, which I am happy to record as my best apology for what might appear presumptuous.

LETTER LXIV.

Sept. 23, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I have been ill for this last fortnight, so that I have scarcely set pen to paper, and am still extremely low; yet I must send you a line upon an important subject. Mr. Robins sent his sermon for Dr. Ashworth hither last week, desiring that Mr. Tayler, Mr. Fawcett, and myself, would look it over, and give him our advice whether to print it or not. We have read it attentively, and consulted upon the subject. Mr. Fawcett is for having every thing printed that is likely to do good. Mr. Tayler and I agreed in judgment, that it is an excellent sermon, admirably suited to the occasion, and adapted to be very useful. And had Mr. Robins declined accepting the office of tutor, we should have much urged his printing it. But as he accepts that office, we think he had better waive it.* He is much pleased with our advice. I am now therefore, in his name and Mr. Tayler's, to desire you immediately to print your sermon. We think this a proper token of respect to the doctor's memory. As he desired that no funeral sermon, properly so called, should be preached for him, this circumstance may naturally be mentioned by you as a reason why nothing in the usual way was printed, only what might be of general use.

Mr. Robins seems much affected with the greatness of the work he is undertaking. I have said and done what I can to encourage him, and I hope when the pain of removing is over, he will be more easy, and then I have nothing else to fear. I wish a suitable successor may soon be heard of, and then he will set about his new work with spirit and cheerfulness.

When I had written thus far Mr. C— called on me. This was the very person I had in my eye. I have heard him preach, was much pleased with his sermon, and more with his prayer, and think he will suit the people well, if they know their own interest.

Being tired with writing thus much, I have been obliged once to walk out, and several times to lie down on my couch. During my last recumbency, I looked over some letters of Dr. Doddridge, and at last, to my great joy, I have found that to which I referred in my last, and now I send you this extract.

"I never thought of parting with my right to the copy of the Family Expositor. I fully intend, if God spare my life, to publish it in neat pocket volumes, the size of the Spectator, for the sake of the poor, contracting the paraphrase, and entirely omitting the prefaces, notes, &c., but this must rest as a secret

* The reasons were here given, of which I could not see the force.

with you." N. B. This letter is not dated, but it was in answer to one I wrote to him, May 13, 1751, which was the year he died. You will be pleased to keep this extract by you, and think of the affair. I wish to have this plan followed. I have no doubt but such a work would sell well. I often regret that I did not do it myself; but it is now too late.* This and a thousand other negligences, for which I am humbled and ashamed, lead me to do what I can to quicken my younger brethren. I seldom see them, or write to them, without desiring them to think on me, and learn activity, diligence, and resolution, in their great work, by my weakness and incapacity; and if it has this good effect upon their minds, I shall think my sufferings not in vain. I had something more to say to you but I cannot recollect it.

May God strengthen you for all the labours to which he is calling you. Though I cannot work myself, I love to stand by and see others vigorously working, to whom God has given hearts and strength.

Yours very affectionately.

LETTER LXV.

Sept. 29, 1775.

Dear Sir,—I am still very low, and not fit to write, but I must scribble a few lines to you in the most laconic manner possible. I am glad you have begun the bible. May God direct and prosper you in this most important, excellent, and useful design! You will find it easier than you imagine, and greatly profitable to yourself and flock. The bible I referred to was Clark's own printed copy, in which he had made corrections, alterations, and additions. Mr. Clark, of Birmingham, had it, and I am told Mr. H——— had it after his death. The plan I think should be, to interweave Clark's Annotations, by way of paraphrase, like Doddridge's Family Expositor, leaving out every thing but what is necessary to elucidate the text.†

There is no drawing me to Hackney. I have not been out of the sound of Kidderminster bell for six years. I expect soon to be drawn to Shrewsbury, but I shall be insensible of it. May I find mercy at last!

Whatever "the principle of the Americans" may be, the spirit they show is malignant, rebellious, and wicked. My bible teaches me "not to speak evil of dignities," &c. I wish the

* This design I executed in two octavo volumes, A. D. 1800, at the request of a friend, who engaged to be answerable for the expence.

† Hence it plainly appears what Mr. Orton's view was, in the work which he urged me to undertake, and how far it was adhered to by Mr. Gentleman, to whom I afterwards committed the execution of it.

London ministers would leave politics to statesmen, and give themselves wholly to their ministry?* I am sorry that our good friend * * * hath brought any reflections upon himself: I hope they are groundless; but some undoubted intelligence which I have received of his warmth in political matters leads me to wish he would seriously review his friend Waldo's Commentary on the Liturgy, p. 221.

I have personally known few from America, but those few whom I have had transactions with, I have found shamefully dishonest men, and ungrateful. I particularly refer to Dr. Whittaker, and those with whom he is connected. I have conversed concerning Dr. Smith, the great patriot and orator, with a most sensible presbyterian minister from Pennsylvania, a rich and sensible quaker, a merchant in Philadelphia, and a considerable dignitary of the church of England; and they all agree that he is a hollow deceitful fellow, who will do any thing for money and fame. This was long before the American squabbles began. I have now a letter before me from your predecessor, Mr. Barker, in which he has this passage: "The longer you live the more you will know, that there is but little candour and benevolence in the world; and not so much truth and justice by far as there should be among Christians, ministers, and members of churches. Some of our merchants have said of the people of New England, They are very godly; it 's pity but they were honest."

I will send you if I can, on the other side, an extract from the letters of Dr. Watts, Mr. Barker, and others, to Dr. Doddridge. The best way to deal with the methodists is "neither to bless them at all, nor curse them at all."

I know not how many of your sermon on Dr. Ashworth's death it will be proper to print; you are the best judge by the sale of your other publications; but I think you may venture on a thousand. I suppose my sermons on Christian Worship are with Buckland by this time. If I did not direct one for you I was very ungrateful, or rather very forgetful.

In No. 25 [of Nonconformist's Memorial] you mention Bowles, of Yorkshire, as son of the famous Oliver Bowles. I wish you had observed that the father was the author of a most excellent book, called Pastor Evangelicus, which went through several editions in England and Holland. It is neat, elegant, easy Latin, and a most valuable book for the use of ministers. I wish it was reprinted. I should have been glad if you could have found room in your work to have inserted a short account of Dr. Edmund Calamy's life. He did so much service to our

* The London ministers, in general, did not interfere in politics so much as my good friend had been led to suppose. Nor did they who espoused the cause of the Americans introduce political matters into the pulpit near so much as they on the opposite side. In this and some other particulars he listened too much to some "accuser of the brethren."

interest, that he deserved the most honourable mention and remembrance.*

It is this day thirty years since I was ordained to the pastoral office. I have a thousand negligences and failings, in that relation, to mourn over, and many undeserved favours and mercies to be thankful for. Work while you can, and work well. Loss of time sits heavy on my mind. May you have more comfortable reflections in the close of life! I beg you will commend me to the pious and benevolent remembrance of your brethren and praying friends.

I am yours very affectionately.

LETTER LXVI.

Dec. 21, 1775.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—I have just received your letter, which I am very thankful for. I must write a few lines just as my strength will admit. The want of propriety and connexion you will excuse. Elegance of expression and refined sentiments you are not to expect from me, and it is a pleasure to me to think that you do not.

I am sorry you cannot think of ——† where I believe you would have been very comfortable and useful, and would have had more time, than in your present situation. Your reasons carry great weight with them, which I cannot gainsay.

I lament, with you, the state of many of our ministers and churches. We have about us a set of serious, and most of them evangelical ministers, but the methodists are breaking in upon them, and Lady Huntingdon's preachers, whom I know not by what name to call.

I approve your postscript‡ to the sermon for Dr. Ashworth very much, and think it calculated to do much good, if ministers and the laity will attend to it as they ought, which I greatly doubt. I see nothing impracticable, imprudent, or likely to produce any evil consequences, in the plan you propose. I shall be glad to do all I can to encourage it.

But the scheme of training up young men for the ministry, who have had no previous classical knowledge, is attended with many difficulties and objections. I have known many such who had what may be called *half* an education, and they have generally turned out ignorant and conceited bigots, and been

* Such an account was afterwards drawn up, and appeared in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, No. 2.

† A respectable situation in that country, to which he would have recommended me, knowing that I disliked the neighbourhood of London.

‡ This postscript contains some Hints for promoting the Interest of Religion among the Dissenters, which have since been sanctioned by the exertions of some zealous friends to religion, of different denominations.

very troublesome to their regular brethren, in their respective neighbourhoods. I have no objection to Mr. Gentleman's making the trial, especially with young Welshmen. I have told him that I would not subscribe to the scheme, because I would not have my name stand with the encouragers of it, till I saw how it was likely to answer; but that I would contribute to the support of the pupils if he could assure me, after six months' trial, that they were diligent, humble, modest, and seemed likely to turn out moderate and useful men. Here the matter rests at present.

I have no fear that your scheme will hurt our academies. We really want more academies, and some where young men might be educated with less expence, though they come out with less learning than at our present seminaries. I got several young men educated at Northampton, partly upon your plan, who turned out useful ministers. It is no uncommon thing for a clergyman of learning, good character, and seriousness, to take a young man or two into his family as pupils, and give them a kind of education for the church. The bishops make no scruple of ordaining them, and I know one in this neighbourhood who had no other education, and who is a very serious useful preacher, and an active pastor, though possessed of very little learning, and not much judgment or prudence.

The methods which you propose in your sermon [for increasing the number of useful ministers]—all of them, as far so I can recollect, I used at Shrewsbury, as much as I could, and I found great benefit by them.

In my Sermons on Christian Worship I did not forget the circumstance of "coming to it in due time," but I could not tell how to introduce it without breaking in upon my plan. I once preached upon that subject from these words, "Ye said, What a weariness is it," &c., which had a good and lasting effect upon my people, and I had little reason to complain of them afterwards. If I can find it I will send you this discourse.*—We are by no means so bad in the country, as you are in and about London.

I never saw "Worthington's book,"† but I have seen the extract from it which you sent me, in some magazine or review. From his general character, and the moderation he showed in his first publication, I should have expected better things from him. I think he deserves a little dressing for his bigotry, and indeed his inconsistency. But it may be doubtful whether it is

* He afterwards favoured me with the perusal of it, and I could not but wish it had been inserted in the above volume, as the subject has always appeared to me of greater importance than is generally apprehended.

† Dr. Worthington's pamphlet was entitled Irenicum; or the Importance of Unity in the Church of Christ considered, &c. A just and sufficient animadversion upon the passage referred to, appeared in the Monthly Review, which superseded any thing from me. See the appendix to Monthly Review for December, 1775, vol. liii. p. 523.

worth while to take notice of so ill grounded and uncharitable an invective. If you should think proper to take any notice of him, pray get the first book he published, long before his Boyle's Lectures, upon the progress of knowledge and virtue in the world, entitled An Essay on the Divine Dispensations, &c. You will see some things there, inconsistent with what he has said of the dissenters in this last publication.

I do not understand politics:* I have other more important matters to engage my attention. The New Testament is my political system. Let you and me do what we can to mend the world and save souls. Let us keep our breath, our strength, and our pens, intent upon this great work, and may God prosper us in it! With my best wishes,

I am, &c.

LETTER LXVII.

March 27, 1777.

Dear Sir,—I take the opportunity, by a tradesman in this town, of returning your Scripture Catechism, with a paper enclosed, in which you will find some queries and remarks, which I submit to your candour; and shall only say, that if they are of any use to you I shall be glad. No doubt your character for orthodoxy will suffer for presuming to put the words of *scripture alone* into children's mouths, instead of "the words which man's wisdom," (or rather I should say his folly,) "teacheth."† But I believe this will be no material injury to you, and you can bear it as well as most men.

I can do nothing with the "sermon against coming late to worship." I have sent it to Mr. Addington, who wished to see it, on hearing you mention it. I have desired him to preach and print a discourse upon the subject. If mine is of any use to him I shall be glad. You have probably seen Mr. Fawcett's

* Nor did I ever pretend that I did; only I now and then said a word to soften the resentment of my worthy friend against those whom he was continually, and I thought unjustly, censuring for adhering to the true whiggish principles of our constitution.

† If the scriptures be the standard of sound doctrine, one would think that they who adhere the closest to the *words* of scripture would be deemed the most orthodox. And yet, strange as it may seem, such a regard to the oracles of truth is by many considered as a mark of heresy. And some parents whom I have known, would rather their children should not be catechized at all, than that they should be taught a catechism, in which (as in this) "the answers are expressed in the words of the bible only."—It has been urged as an objection, "that the words of scripture may be placed in such a connexion as to contradict the doctrine of scripture." It is true that they may: and so they may when scripture texts are brought as *proofs*, to confirm any point expressed in *human* words. But in both cases the question is, whether they are or are not thus abused? It must surely be allowed, by all, to be an advantage to children to have a number of scripture passages laid up in their memories; and one would imagine a teacher would find a far greater satisfaction in expounding such passages, than any human words whatever.

Candid Reflections upon the Trinity. I think it will for ever ruin his reputation among the warm zealous people. I warned him of this when he showed me his manuscript; but he seems fearless of the consequence, and I am sure I have no fear about it. I hope it will do good to many of his congregation, who are very stiff and bigoted, and call every minister an Arian who does not use their favourite phrases and doxologies, though they know nothing of the matter.

I heartily wish Dr. Wilton better health. I have a great respect for him, and hope he will be very useful to the church. I know he will be an agreeable friend and neighbour to you. I must leave him to use what doxologies he thinks proper. But I should have a very low opinion of the apostles and their inspiration, if I did not think their doxologies amply sufficient. I feel very tenderly for the good doctor. I perceived his nerves were very bad. On that account I wish he had a quiet country settlement as a minister, for London is not a place suited to bad nerves and spirits on any account.

You tell me, you "have not laid up since you have been in the ministry." Will you indulge me while—I do not indeed ask you why you have not; but only suggest, that a man who has a wife and children should seriously ask himself that question.* Is it impossible to save any thing? I do not suppose that you are any way extravagant. But are you not too generous, hospitable, and charitable? There are very few persons to whom I should have occasion to write in this strain. But ministers in London, by living among the great and luxurious, are apt to get too much into the fashion, and live superior to what prudence and economy dictate.

You are very sensible I would not have you sneaking and penurious, but I fear your great benevolence and regard to your friends may lead you into the other extreme.† To say "I have a wife and a number of children," would be a sufficient reason to give any of your acquaintance, who may be disposed to censure you for living nearer than some of your brethren, and being less charitable than some of them are, or expect you to be. I wish you had a few more hundreds to make you more useful. Only allow me to say—Remember the uncertainty of your life, and remember your family. I will make no apology

* The question was easily answered, and I suppose to my friend's satisfaction, if I told him the fact,—that so long as my worthy colleague lived, my subscription from two congregations amounted but to £90 a year, and that for many years afterwards it was less than double that sum. Now whosoever knows the expence of house-rent and taxes, and the price of provisions, &c., in the vicinity of London, will readily exculpate a dissenting minister from the crimes of too great "generosity and hospitality," if with a large family, and a little property of his own, he can but just make ends meet. Happy would some esteem themselves if they could do that.

† It would be equally indelicate here, either to plead guilty or not guilty. But the above admonitions are retained, as they may meet with readers to whom they may be seasonable.

for this freedom. Ask your wife if it needs one. If she says it doth, I will in my next be extremely humble and submissive.

When a text strikes me, I love to be doing a little in the old way, and I now and then send Mr. —— a plan of a sermon, by which I save him some time and trouble, and thus I may say, I am, in effect, preaching to my old and much beloved hearers; for he hath by far the best part of the divided flock.

I am very weak in body and mind, of which I have sent you convincing evidence in this letter, but not less expressive of being,

Dear Sir, your affectionate, &c.

LETTER LXVIII.

July 18, 1777.

Why do you trouble yourself, my dear sir, to give me a long account of your reasons for going to * *, and staying there with your family so long? Know you not that I am not likely to meet with any of those impertinent people who would be disposed to find fault with you?* Nay, do not you know that, if I were, I should immediately cut them short, with our Master's answer, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." I believe few persons hear less of censures and reflections of this kind than I do, because I am not possessed of such complaisance as to hear impertinence, especially any thing like censoriousness, without a spirited reply, or at least an angry countenance. However, if I should hear you censured, I will amply vindicate you. I am glad you went to * *, had so much comfort there with so little expense, and hope your family is returned in better health. Censure is the tax which a man pays for being any ways distinguished; and that sort of people, like you, who are truly evangelical without being rigidly orthodox, fare worse than your most heretical brethren.

I believe Mr. B—— will leave Daventry. I am sorry, upon the whole, as he is well qualified to fill the useful station in which he hath so long been; and a young man, just taken out of a class in the academy, is by no means fit for such a post. I often wonder at persons quitting such a station, in which they are more useful as tutors and occasional preachers, than probably they will be in the care of any single congregation. It was with much regret that I left Northampton. I should have liked to have lived and died in that post, but for the circumstance of uniting two congregations at Shrewsbury. If there be any thing disagreeable to an assistant tutor in the family, let him

* I was the most fearful of incurring my correspondent's censure, as the affair referred to had the appearance of a defect in that good economy which he so often recommended to his younger brethren.

take a house in the town, and if he sees fit to marry, I know not why he might not continue in his office.

Whether Mr. B. will accept * * I know not. I wish on some accounts he may. If not, I wish you to come there. I will do what I can to draw you thither. Your discouragements as to usefulness seem to me fully to justify your removal.* I grieve for the state of things amongst us, especially in and about London. The spirit of the world, the love of dissipation and trifles, prevail so much as to eat out the very life of religion, and turn public worship into a matter of mere entertainment, or an idle ceremony.

Your convert * * will do you no credit by his strain of preaching, and the censoriousness and bitterness with which he speaks of all who differ from himself. Mr. F—— is to admit a person into communion next sacrament day, who was made a dissenter by your catechism. I am not sorry for his becoming a dissenter; but why he should join in communion here, when there is a dissenting minister in the neighbourhood of * *, where he lives, is another question. I think Mr. F—— does not act upon Mr. Baxter's maxim "never to admit any to his communion, who had godly ministers of their own." But perhaps this half-enlightened convert may say, "The minister at * * is not godly." I hope and believe he is. But we are too fond of receiving members from neighbouring places, and to glory in some that I would not admit to communion.

It gives me singular pleasure to hear from you and Mr. T.—— &c., that Mr. Robins met with such acceptance in London. I hope God will keep him in a station which he fills with so much honour and usefulness.

I have read Mr. Addington's manuscript "on coming late to worship." I have cautioned him against making it too long. He is rather diffuse, using more words than I think needful. But I hope the tract will do good. Some hints in my sermon, which I thought peculiarly important and striking, I see he has omitted. I suppose he thought them too free and familiar. But I see no reason why such unpolite and ill-mannered persons† as he reproves, should be treated with so much deference, especially in a printed tract that is personally addressed to no one.

Mr. Fawcett has had a letter from your great doctor * *, complaining of his misrepresenting and ill treating the great John Calvin, in a quotation from him about the Trinity. The letter, with the external appearances of civility, is rather dogmatical, insolent, and trifling. Mr. F——, I believe, will take no notice of it, nor do you. I hope that in his second edition he will confound the learned doctor with sufficient proofs that

* These were such as were not peculiar to Hackney, but common to the villages about London.

† If the matter be truly attended to, these epithets will not appear unjust.

Calvin did say what he mentions. He has had the warmest thanks for this publication, from many dissenting ministers who are the greatest ornaments of our body, and blessings to our churches. And I think the flimsy attacks of Dr. ——, and some others from whom he has had letters, have roused his spirits and determined him to stick to his text; yea, "if this be vile, to be more vile."

I have thus talked to you till I am tired; and I love no correspondents but whom I can *talk to*. May God long continue you to burn and shine in his church, and turn many to righteousness! I am, &c.

LETTER LXIX.

September 16, 1777.

Dear Sir,—I can now inform you that our friend Wells, from whom I have had a letter, is getting strength daily, though I fear he will not be able to preach for some time. He is an excellent man, and takes great pains with his flock; more indeed than his strength will bear, so that I fear he will be obliged to drop some of his country lectures, which have been very useful. I wish you may succeed in your intended application in his favour.* We are all "Independents" in this country, and have no distinguishing names except Baptists. Mr. Jenkins is by birth a Welshman, but has been now a great many years at Bromsgrove, and was never settled as a minister in Wales, being only an itinerant.† I hope you will do what you can to engage part of the legacy for him. The separation at Bromsgrove was not begun upon any difference about church government, but as most divisions have been, from the overbearing temper of some persons on both sides. Could you procure some of this legacy for Mr. G——? His congregation is called "Independent," and had money left to support the Independent interest at S—— before it was united with the other. He has a large family, and a donation would be very acceptable.

If you will let me know determinately when you will be here, Providence permitting, I will take what methods I prudently can respecting * *.‡ But unless it is highly probable that you should like the situation, you had better do and say nothing

* For a donation left to "English Independent ministers," by the will of a Mrs. Halsey, in the Borough of Southwark, with whom I was well acquainted. She was a single lady of moderate fortune, who lived in a frugal manner, that she might be able to do the more good. Among many other instances of liberality, she annually gave fifty pounds at the fund-collection at Pinners'-Hall for poor ministers.

† He had no regular education, but was a sensible and studious man, of an excellent character, and so catholic that when a minister of any note preached at the other meeting, he used to take his little congregation to hear him.

‡ A congregation which he had mentioned to me, and which another minister had strongly recommended.

further about the matter. I am desirous to inform you of every circumstance relating to it, that you may judge how far it is proper for you to proceed.

My Sacramental Meditations are finished, but I do not choose they shall be bound till perfectly dry. I have directed a copy to be sent to you. I do not imagine it will suit [persons in any of the extremes] either churchmen or dissenters. I see no reason for calling the Lord's Supper "a seal." I always consider it, as I think the scripture doth, as a commemoration of that death which was the seal of the covenant of grace. I expect much from your candour, and fear nothing from your censoriousness.

I hope you have preached your congregation a good harvest sermon, to excite their gratitude for this merciful weather, which, I trust, will occasion plenty in all our coasts. These sermons, which come home to the hearers, are likely to be peculiarly acceptable.

You conclude your letter "in great haste, being Saturday." But why are you in such great haste on Saturday? Is this good and prudent management, to leave your composition for the Lord's day (which I suppose was the case) till Saturday? What if some company call on you, or any avocation happen, or yourself, or any of your family, should be taken ill that day? Then I fear the Lord's day work would not be so good as it ought to be. And how do you get time to examine, correct, and make yourself master of your sermon, if it be not finished till Saturday evening? Pray correct this bad habit, which is too general among our divines.* I am sure you will find the comfort and advantage of having your work finished early in the week. Experto crede. Accept the attempts and best wishes of Your, &c.

LETTER LXX.

September 29, 1777.

No more apologies or compliments, dear sir, for any thing you desire me to do, which I can do or attempt, to serve you. Herein I am "serving the Lord Christ; and while I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour."

On the receipt of yours I wrote to * * *. I hope I did not exceed my commission. But I am in doubt about this affair. I can say nothing more on this subject; only I desire you seriously to consider of it, and especially to attend to the vast difference between your present income and what you may expect at * *. Remember your disposition is perhaps too free

* The above reproof and advice are just and good, where the case really is what is here taken for granted. But a minister may have much to do on a Saturday, in preparing for the work of the sabbath, who has not his preparation to *begin* on that day.

and liberal, and you do not know much of the *chrematistic* art. Therefore it is not desirable that your income should be lessened so much as in this case it would be. Think and think again on this point, and consult any friends in whom you can place confidence. I have only to add my sincere wish and prayer, that divine Providence may direct you in this and every other important concern, and settle you where you may do most service in the cause of real religion.

I have nothing more to say about *finishing* your sermons earlier in the week, but that if you will try the experiment, you will soon get into a habit. I wish for Dr. Wilton's sake that he may do so too; and also correct his habit of sitting up late and lying long in bed. I know by experience it is bad for his health. But I will give him a better authority than mine. Desire him to look into Dr. Watts's Sermons, vol. ii. No. 24, p. 128, 8vo., where he remonstrates against this practice. I am glad to hear of his welfare and usefulness, but writing is painful and injurious to me; and were it not for short-hand (blessed be the memory of the inventor) I should write very few letters. I have but two correspondents who do not understand it.

I thank you for your remembrance of Mr. Wells. I hope he will be able to preach soon. Mr. Watson gave me the history of the good old lady's legacy, as he had it from some one in London, and thinks to recommend Mr. Jenkins, but fears, as he was born on the Welsh side of Offa's ditch, an objection may be made to him.

Mr. Fawcett desires me to return you his thanks for the passage which you sent him from Charnock.* He is this week sending his Reflections to the press for a second edition, greatly enlarged. It is astonishing what a number of passages he has picked up, from our orthodox divines, in favour of his argument. He will confound his opponents with evidence from their own favourite writers. He seems to fear no consequence from this publication. I think studying and writing upon this subject has done him good. He confines himself more to scriptural doxologies, and does not seem so desirous as many of our brethren are, to be wiser than Paul, Peter, and John.

I hear, with great concern, that good Dr. Furneaux's disorder has settled on his brain, and occasioned a distraction. My old friend and neighbour, Mr. * *, has been for many months laid aside by a deep melancholy. How light are my burdens compared with such afflictions as these! May I be more patient and more thankful!

During the interval of writing this I met with a letter of Dr. Watts to Dr. Doddridge, in which he advises him "never to tell the world, in print or by conversation, what he intends

* In which he quotes some words of Calvin, similar to what Mr. Fawcett had referred to, which had been excepted against.

afterwards to publish. It will save some trouble, prevent many impertinent questions and impertinent advices, and secure him from being censured as unsteady, if he should see reason to wave his design or alter his plan." This seems prudent advice. I hear nothing yet of your Scripture Catechism.* Commend me respectfully to my brethren and friends. I am, &c.

P. S. Once again, take time, much time, to consider of this matter, and come to no hasty resolution. Excuse such repetitions. I stand in doubt of you.

*** In the next letter he says, "My friends think that when it comes to the pinch you will not quit your present connexions; and that it is wrong to talk of leaving any situation till one has made up his mind to do it." A wise and useful remark, which is here inserted for the caution of all who may need it.

LETTER LXXI.

No date. It must have been in Jan. 1778.

DEAR SIR,—I would give you the best assistance I could respecting the affair of * *. † I have thought it over, and talked it over, with some of our brethren and common friends who know and value you, and who know that people better than I do. And I find their opinion is the same as mine, that you are not likely to be so comfortable and useful there as we wish you to be, and think you may be in some other place.

You will better judge of the propriety of a removal by the regard your present congregation show to you when they know of the affair. Much depends on this circumstance, which a person of less penetration than yourself would carefully observe and be much influenced by.‡ In every remove you well know that fresh difficulties will occur, and that it is easier to guard against, or to bear, such as we have been acquainted with and have expected, than some new and unexpected ones in a new station.

I do not think Mr.—— will do for * *, if I thought it right for him to leave his present station, where he is much beloved and very useful. I think I have substantial reasons for this

* See page 657.—This piece was first printed for the use of my own catechumens, without being published. It was afterwards published with some improvements, and has passed through seven editions. I am happy to find it adopted in Sunday schools, being suited to all parties.

† I had consulted him about an application which I had received from another congregation, in a part of the country where I had many partial friends, who, knowing my strong inclination to a country residence, had advised an invitation to be sent to me.

‡ In justice to the members of my church and congregation, I am bound to acknowledge, that when I made the affair known to them, they united in a very friendly and respectful request that I would continue with them, which I immediately resolved to do, and I have had no reason since to repent of the determination.

opinion, as I know his manner of preaching, his temper, &c. better than you do. What brought him to London I know not. But considering his state of health, and his circumstances, a London journey at this season of the year did not seem quite prudent. He might, however, have some important business to do. Perhaps I am rather prejudiced against rambling ministers, and impute some things to my brethren as wrong and blameable which may be right and fit. But I see so few of them who attend to the maxims of prudence and economy, with regard to themselves and their families, that I am ready to censure some of them perhaps without reason. I know some ministers who make a *trading* and very *profitable journey* to London yearly. But the money gained that way does not always redound to their honour, and their usefulness in their proper post. The worthiest, most pious, active, and useful ministers I have known, in our parts of the kingdom, never were in London, or but once in their lives; they choose to abide by their flocks, and content themselves with small and not expensive excursions, among their brethren, relations, and friends in their own neighbourhood.

I am glad to receive from you so good account of Sir H—— T——. It exactly agrees with that of our friend T——. As he has undertaken the pastoral care of a church, I wish he could stay with them and not ramble about. I had no opinion of him but what I formed from reading his Confession of Faith, and some accounts I had heard of him several months ago. I am glad he is as he is, and wish he may improve and be steady. I hope he will attend to the charge which was given him at his ordination, which is upon the whole one of the best I ever saw, and shines with peculiar lustre after the trash which preceded it in the publication. I wish our dissenting brethren may be prudent [in their conduct towards this gentleman,] neither extol him too much, nor vaunt of him as a convert. This will do him no kindness in any respect, nor be any credit to themselves or our interest. I wish them always to distinguish between the baronet and the Christian divine. I pray God to make and keep him prudent, and incline him to mind his studies, that he may be "thoroughly furnished for every good work." I should like to hear him, though I have not much of the spirit of curiosity in me, and with all my infirmities am not troubled with "itching ears."

I beg you will send me Dr. Doddridge's letters* by the first safe hand. I want them very much, that I may destroy some and select others to be kept. Though I know not how they may be made useful, it is a pity they should be all destroyed.

* Mr. Orton had favoured me with the perusal of the copies of a great number of the doctor's letters to his correspondents. Mr. Stedman afterwards published a volume of Letters to and from Dr. Doddridge, but I presume none, or few, of these.

You will be pleased with his letters to Dr. Wright, who was always very much his friend. I have seen many worse letters in print than any in the whole collection. But I would not have you hurt your sight by poring too much upon them, for they are not very easy to read, but keep your eyes for more important work.

I am greatly pleased with Dr. Taylor's letter.* It is indeed a very valuable curiosity. He had, to the last, a great deal of the puritan in him. I hope you will make what inquiry you can about the manuscript. I wish it may be discovered, and that the possessor may be willing to part with it to some one who would complete the design. I never heard of this intention of his before. Still I think the plan of republishing Clark, in the manner I propose, may be better than Henry [thus abridged]. I do not see any great weight in the doctor's objection respecting the length of time in going through the bible. I have read Henry and Doddridge several times over in my family, and have gone through both in about six years. I wish Dr. Disney† may give you any intelligence relating to Taylor's manuscript. I have just been reading a curious sermon of his [at a visitation] which breathes an excellent spirit; yet I wish he had urged upon the clergy more zeal and activity in their labours. This would have well coincided with the spirit of his ancestors.

I thank God I have been for some weeks past pretty easy and comfortable: as well as I must ever expect to be. May I live to some good purpose! And may you, this year, and for many future years, glorify God, serve your generation, and do much good in the world and church.

I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER LXXII.

April 13, 1778.

Dear Sir,—I am glad upon the whole that you stay at Hackney, though I fear your showing a disposition to remove may lessen your influence, esteem, and affection among your people.‡ I suppose you had this advice in your lectures, as we

* I had sent Mr. Orton an original letter of Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Taylor, written so long ago as the year 1724, in which among other things he mentions his being engaged in abridging Henry's Exposition. It should seem, from some things in it, that Mr. Taylor's sentiments were then different from what they were afterwards known to be. A copy of this letter was inserted in the Univ. Theol. Mag. Sept. 1804, and it produced one from Mr. Edward Taylor, of Norwich, a grandson of the doctor, giving an account of the above-mentioned manuscript, a great part of which is in his possession; and he sent a specimen of it to that periodical work.

† He was then vicar of Swinderby, in Lincolnshire, and favoured me with his correspondence, concerning some of his ancestors, who were nonconformists.

‡ Happily it had a contrary effect. They knew that I could have no worldly interest

had in ours, "Never to talk of removing till you see your way quite clear." * I know the congregation both at * * and * * * have made some complaints of you, as not using them quite well; giving them encouragement to expect your settlement with them, and then disappointing them. I presume this was not the case, and that they judged wrong of you.

I have had a letter from Mr. R—— of N——n, inquiring if I know any minister that will suit them: but I know of no such person who is moveable. I have made inquiry, but without effect. I know ministers enough who are moveable, but they are such as I cannot recommend there, or indeed any where else.

I am not at all pleased with the thoughts of Mr. * * * settling at * * *. I think he is too good a preacher for London, except he had something in his manner better adapted to draw people together. I scarcely know one under whose ministry I should be more desirous to sit. I think he would be more acceptable, comfortable and useful, in the country, and I wish he had come to * * *. But I often think of those words in Job, "Should it be according to thy mind?"

Your letter prepared me for the mournful tidings of Dr. Wilton's death. I very much lament this event, though I always considered the doctor as likely to be short-lived. I think it was very wrong for a person of his constitution to leave his country situation for London. His manner of preaching did not seem to me calculated to draw people after him in the great city; but I could hardly judge from hearing him a few times. The air of London was never likely to suit his constitution; and I do not understand ministers living so far from their people even as Hackney is from the city.† I sincerely condole with his relations, friends, and brethren. Indeed our interest has suffered a great loss. But I bless God, it is not my temper to despair of the commonwealth, much less of the church of Christ. I can

in view, and I had no cause of dissatisfaction with them, more than I should have probably had with any other society near the metropolis.

* The above wise advice, together with what my judicious friend has said to his other correspondents concerning their removal, I beg leave to recommend to my younger brethren, as well as the whole of these letters to myself on that subject. Some will probably think too much of it is here retained; but the effect will be happy, if it should convince any of the truth of what my own experience, during almost thirty years which have since elapsed, has fully confirmed, that it is best for ministers not to take any active steps towards their removal, but to wait the clear call of providence; still going on in the way of duty, notwithstanding present difficulties and discouragements, as long as God shall continue ability for it, leaving events to him.

N. B. The passage above quoted is in Dr. Doddridge's Lectures on Preaching and Pastoral Care, which have lately been published, contrary to his design, and the wishes of his friends. The manuscript copies which had got abroad, greatly differ; consequently some must be incorrect. In this printed copy are several inaccuracies and omissions; though, as it is, doubtless it is a very valuable work.

† Such a situation has fewer inconveniences, and more advantages, than Mr. Orton was aware of.

only wish and pray that he may raise up instruments to supply and edify his churches.

Now I am upon this subject, give me leave to whisper a few words in your ear.* I was greatly disappointed when I heard him preach, his discourses were so different from what I expected, considering his publications. I suppose he preached from short hints, without writing his sermons at length; in consequence of which they were little more than skeletons, from twenty-five to thirty heads in each sermon. How was it likely that his hearers should remember his plan? And he wanted more life and spirit in his applications. Many excellent and useful things he said, but in these particulars he seemed to me very defective. Indeed most preachers who use no notes, or very short ones, in younger life, get into that way, which I can by no means think contributes to their acceptance and usefulness. Of these I hear a great many in this place.

Since I began this letter, I have met with a circumstance which has greatly affected me. Taking up the Gentleman's Magazine, I saw an account of the death of Mr. Lister, of Ware, the 14th of March.† Two months ago I heard from Mr. * * *. He is not easy where he is, though I think he has no cause for uneasiness, but what he will meet with every where. He expects too much. He is not sufficiently frugal and provident, considering his family and his marrying a wife without fortune. Our wise forefathers calculated their income and expences better than some of us do, and waived many gratifications out of regard to their families, and that they might not be burdensome to their people.

I have nothing to say about politics, but well remember the saying of Synesius, πολιτικην αρετην ιερωσυνη συνατειη, &c., or, in plain English, "What hath a bishop to do with politics?"

You ask me a question at the close of your last, which the seal has covered (which is very bad in short-hand), about "family prayers." I understand your meaning.‡ I will tell you in confidence, that I have attempted something of that kind, but I cannot execute it. There is something to me so unnatural and awkward in sitting down to write a prayer, that I am puzzled and confounded, though I once drew up a few for a conforming divine, which with some others he printed. I wish for a set of prayers for one week, that shall be plain, serious, evangelical,

* I should not have reported this "whisper" to the public, but from a conviction of the propriety of the remark, and the importance of the admonition founded upon it. I believe my worthy friend did not do himself justice. He was very timid, and I know Mr. Orton's presence was a restraint upon him.

† Here follows much the same account of this old friend as was given to another correspondent. See p. 585.

‡ My design was to engage Mr. Orton to draw up such a set of prayers for families as he here describes. I recollect once having some conversation with him on the subject, when he intimated, that the best way to get any family prayers from *him* would be for some one to take down his when he was praying in his family.

and yet rational and elevated; especially such as might properly be called *family* prayers, of which I never saw any that answered to my idea. Perhaps I may try at it again, but I expect nothing from the attempt.

Our friend Wells is recovering his strength, but he is now executing a plan which I have strongly advised him against. He has taken a little farm two miles from Bromsgrove, which he thinks will contribute to his health, and be a benefit to his family. I wish it may answer his expectation.*

Mr. * * * has been at C—— to open a place of worship, set up by some turbulent people, the leader of whom I know to be no better than he should be. I am angry with him for encouraging such a faction. No one, of his usual calmness, could show more resentment against, or take more pains to prevent, a like attempt, made by one M—— to set up another meeting against his own. But we are not always consistent† in matters wherein our own interest and that of others is concerned.

I am glad your children have escaped the epidemical distemper, and wish they may live to be comforts to you. I hope you will not forget the Old Testament, but be doing something at it daily.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful friend and servant,

JOB ORTON.

* With all due submission to the judgment of so wise a man as Mr. Orton, I could not but regard this as a prudent step in my worthy friend, who was early accustomed to agriculture, and I retained the above passage chiefly for the sake of expressing my opinion, that a minister in the country, who has but a small income, and a large family (especially if, as in this case, he has sons capable of labour), cannot do better than to take a few acres of land, to grow at least what is equal to the consumption of his own family; provided he has a competent skill in the affairs of husbandry; and especially if his constitution requires much air and exercise. To *dig* is certainly better than to *beg*, and of this there is the least reason to be *ashamed*.

† Such instances of inconsistency are by no means uncommon among dissenting ministers, who are too ready when applied to for their countenance, by persons who profess great zeal for the gospel, to listen to unfavourable reports concerning their brethren; forgetful of their Master's golden rule, and his many exhortations to peace and unity. Hence many of the divisions amongst the dissenters, which are a scandal to their cause, and in some instances prove its ruin.

LETTER LXXIII.

TO THE REV. DR. STONHOUSE,* ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER.

My dear Sir,—I am grieved to hear your amiable daughter is dead. I sincerely and very tenderly sympathize with you under this affliction, by which you are visited with sorrow upon sorrow, as it so soon follows the great loss of your son. Though I know not the heart of a parent, yet I bless God my temper is naturally impressible and compassionate: and though in some cases it hath been a source of grief more than, in like circumstances, many others have felt; yet I believe my suffering friends have not wished it less so, nor upon the whole, have I myself. I have lost many valuable young friends, whose education I had watched over with a parental eye and care; whose characters were upright, amiable, and honourable, and whom therefore I loved as my children. My heart hath felt an anguish upon their removal, perhaps equal to what most parents feel in such cases, and I have found a dreadful chasm made in my hopes and joys.

Such scenes are still in my remembrance; and therefore I feel deeply and affectionately for *you*, under this stroke, to which the distance of time and place† makes no inconsiderable addition. I wish I could any way lighten your burden and dry your weeping eyes. But what can I write or say, but what is already familiar, and I hope soothing and comforting, to your wounded spirit? However, let me desire you to turn your thoughts, dear sir, to God your Father and hers who is now numbered with the dead; and to Jesus Christ her Saviour and yours, and remember his bleeding compassion, dying love, perfect example of submission; his precious promises, his entrance into heaven, and intercession for us there. Turn your thoughts to that fulness of grace and spiritual influence which he has to communicate to all his friends and servants in the time of need. Think of the relation you have to the world on which she is entered, and of the serious hours you have had together, with a view of parting when God appointed.

* The following letter the doctor himself inserted in a newspaper, under the title of a Letter from a Minister to One in Affliction. Writing to Mr. Stedman, soon after, he says (let. vii.), "Mr. Orton's letter to me on the death of my daughter, Mrs. Palk, which appeared in the Bristol Journal, was much liked; and in a following paper there was an encomium upon it, but by whom I know not. He does not wish to have it known that he was the writer of it, because, says he, it was a hasty production; though printed by his own permission, at my request."

† She died in the East Indies, whither the doctor had also sent a son. See an account of the affliction he had in him, page 593.

When you parted with her to so great a distance, I am persuaded you thought it highly probable you should see her no more in the flesh, and your increasing years and infirmities have so much increased that probability since, as almost to forbid the hope of it. So that her removal to another world hath, in this light, many alleviating circumstances; especially as you have so often, so seriously, and so solemnly, since that first parting, left yourself and her and all your interests, mortal and immortal, with her and your Father and God, absolutely and without reserve.

If nature will not be truly influenced by such considerations, turn your thoughts to, and keep them upon, the hope you have of meeting again, and enjoying one another in a far different manner from what this poor world will admit, though she had been settled near you, or even in the place where you live; and which [meeting] when it happens, will make all the duration of our present enjoyment of one another a matter of no consequence at all. Think again, my worthy fellow-labourer in the gospel, what you have said to others in like circumstances, from the pulpit and in the parlour, and what you would say to me, were I now in your [situation]. Think what you have felt and tasted, and will I trust always do, in every day of trouble and distress. In short, turn your thoughts to every thing that will lead and even constrain you to believe the will of God to be wise in all its determinations; infinitely wise; to be approved, therefore, as well as submitted to.

I know you will not dare to say—"Lord, is it fit that such a weight of repeated complicated affliction should fall to my share? that disappointments in my dearest earthly hopes should come one upon another; and that at a time too when I am more than ever intent upon serving thee, promoting thy glory, and saving my fellow immortals?" I know you will veil to infinite wisdom; allow to God acts of sovereignty, and subscribe to the goodness as well as the justice of his conduct. This he demands from us, and this he deserves. And is there any thing in which we appear so much to advantage, and are really so ornamental to religion, and useful to all about us, as in manifesting an humble fiducial resignation to God, and a cheerful acquiescence in his will, when he is pleased to take away the delight of our eyes and joy of our hearts? Do we ever pray so well, recollect ourselves to so good purpose, aspire so much after the favour and love of God? Are we ever so hearty in religion, so careful to cherish and strengthen our hopes of glory? Are we ever so filled with wisdom and goodness; so able, so desirous, to admonish and comfort others, as amidst such painful scenes? Are our passions ever so restrained, the pleasures and possessions of this world so overlooked, and our hearts brought not to seek great things for ourselves and ours (see Jer. xlv. 5),

as by such painful events? How had it been with you and me and other servants of God, had it not been for afflictions; had we not been sometimes sick and sometimes sad; had we not attended chambers of confinement, and seen our lovely flowers fading and dying? But then it is affliction sanctified, attended and followed with humble fervent prayer, and prayer attended and followed with "a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" [that is thus effectual].

You will now show the religion of your divine Master to some considerable advantage; more perhaps than ever; and instead of sinking under the present burden, let it be your main care and labour to do this, and apply vigorously in your Master's work. An officer in our army in Flanders, seeing a brother officer, whom he much loved, slain in a moment near him, said, "Ah! poor captain! he is dead; but come, we must march on."

I wish to hear of your going to Cheverel, as you intended. There air and exercise will, I hope, recruit your languid spirits, and a zealous engagement in your Master's work will divert your mind from brooding over its sorrows, and fill it with thoughts, wishes, and hopes, which will be your best relief, and draw down some peculiar support and consolation from above. For when are we so likely to enjoy them as when we vigorously serve our divine Master, amidst disappointment and tribulation? A pious zealous minister once wrote to me to this effect: "I have been under sore affliction by the death of my dear child; but God enabled me to be the more active and diligent in his work, and I have reason to believe that, by my labours since that event, he hath given me at least seven *spiritual* children, who will be my joy and crown of rejoicing in that day." May this be your happy case! Then it will indeed be good for you to have been thus afflicted. I am daily mindful of you in my poor way, and commend you and yours to the great Intercessor, whom the Father heareth always.

My respects to your good wife and your young folks. I am persuaded they will now study more and more to be a comfort to you, and in them, through the continued goodness of God to you (which you do not and cannot overlook), you have much reason to rejoice.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionately sympathizing and faithful friend,

JOB ORTON.

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